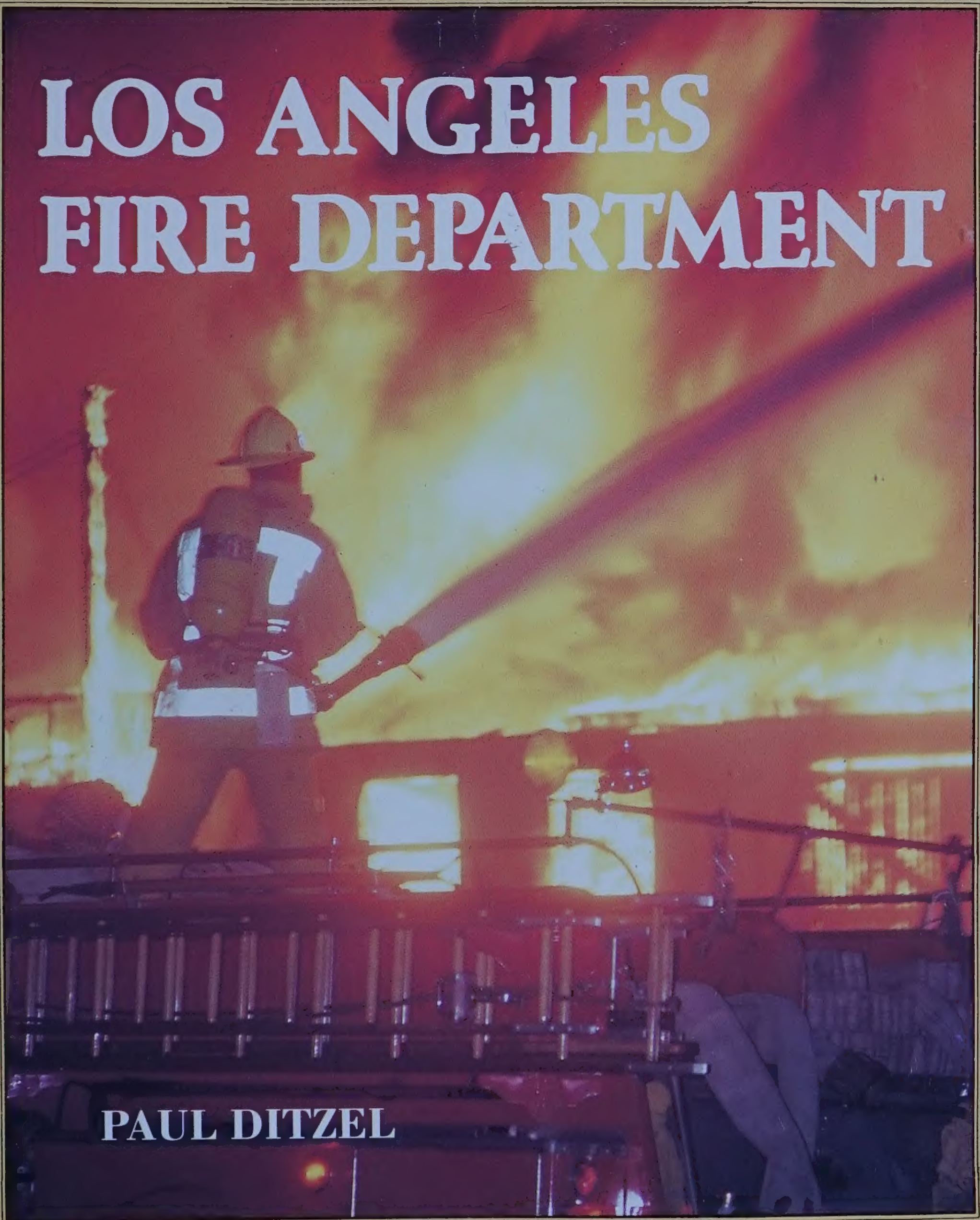
"A CENTURY OF SERVICE"
THE FASCINATING STORY OF THE

LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT



PAUL DITZEL

HUNDREDS OF SPECTACULAR ACTION PHOTOS
OF FIRES AND APPARATUS

Fire Service History Series
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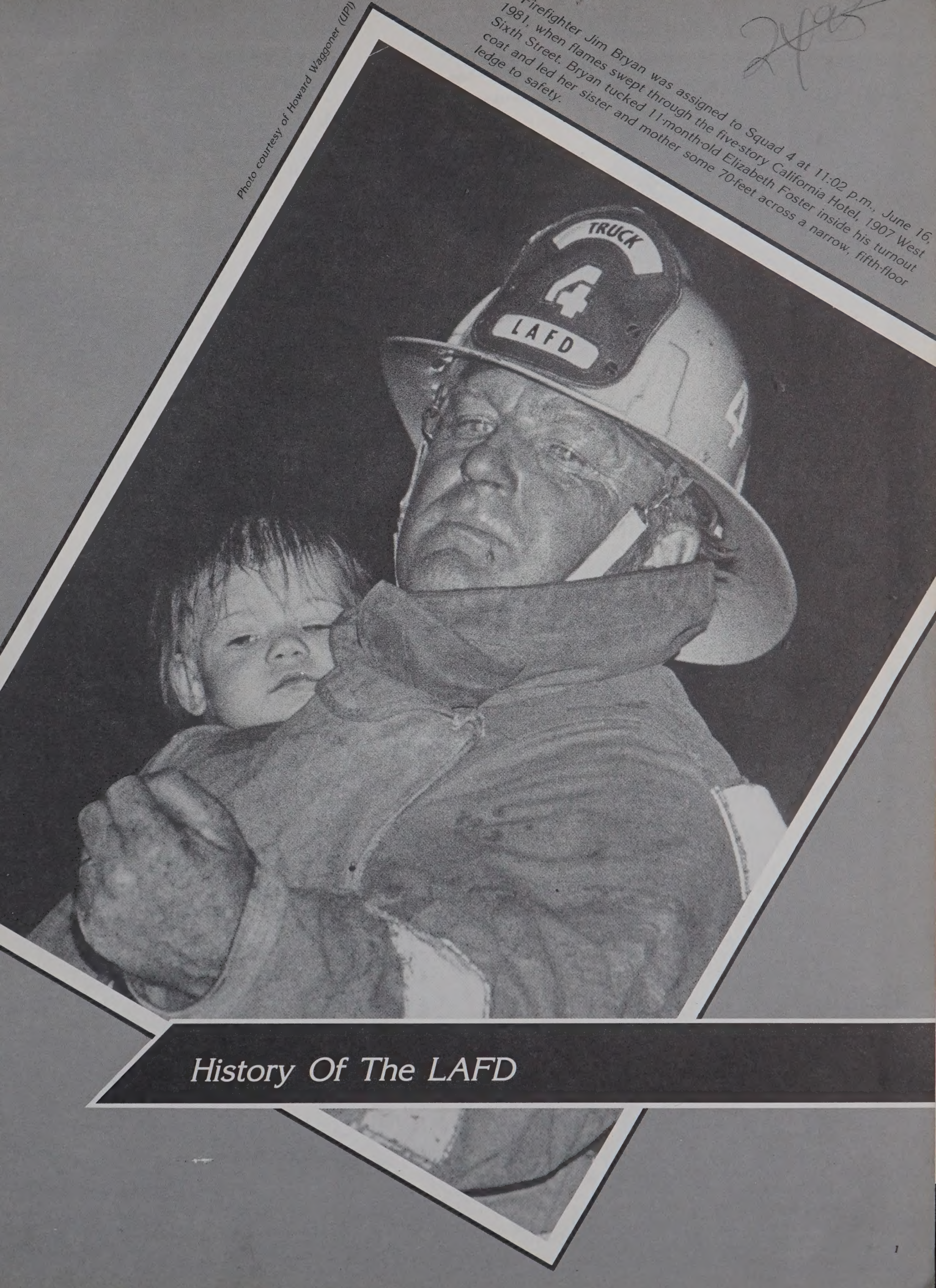
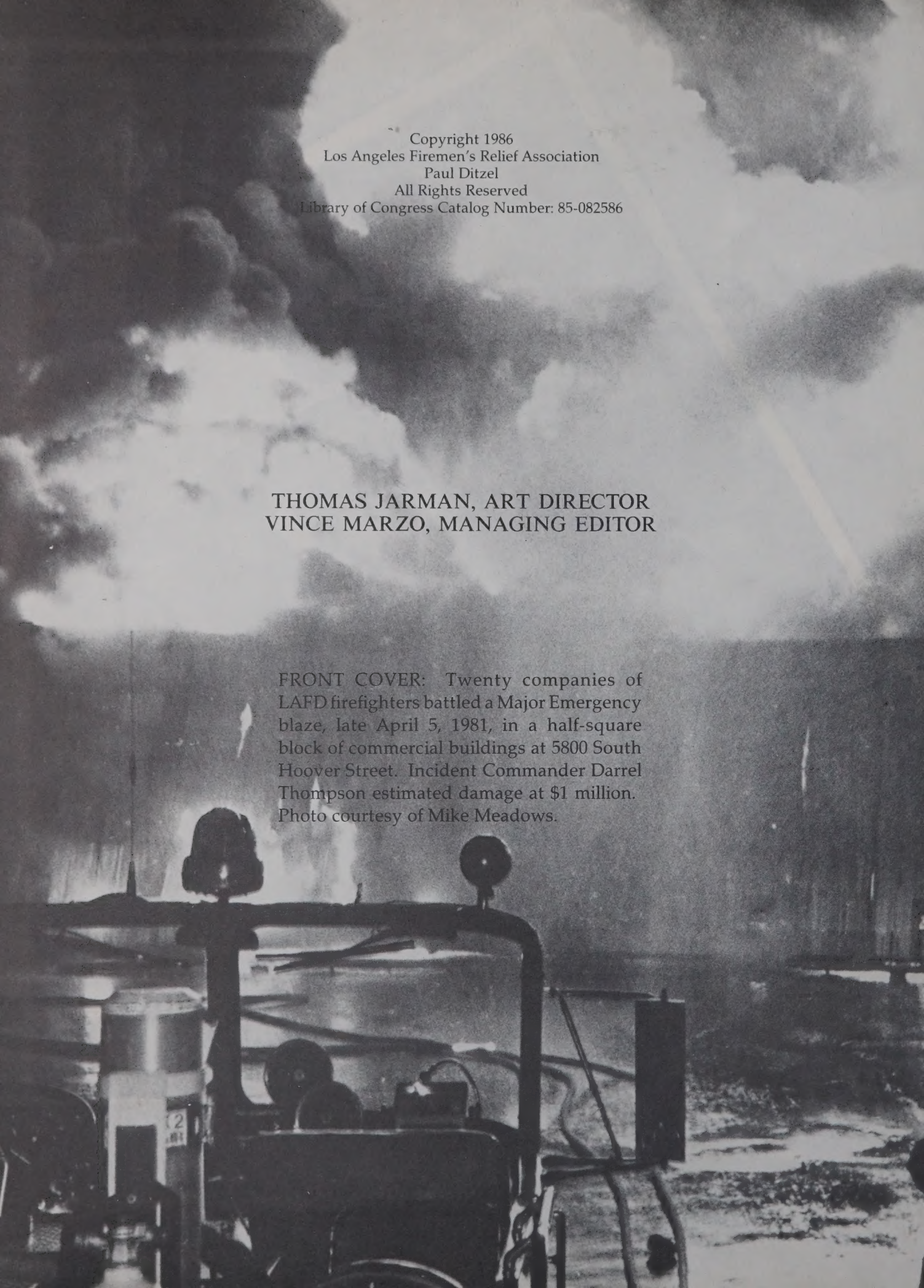


Photo courtesy of Howard Waggoner (UPI)

Firefighter Jim Bryan was assigned to Squad 4 at 11:02 p.m., June 16, 1981, when flames swept through the five-story California Hotel, 1907 West Sixth Street. Bryan tucked 11-month-old Elizabeth Foster inside his turnout coat and led her sister and mother some 70-feet across a narrow, fifth-floor ledge to safety.

History Of The LAFD



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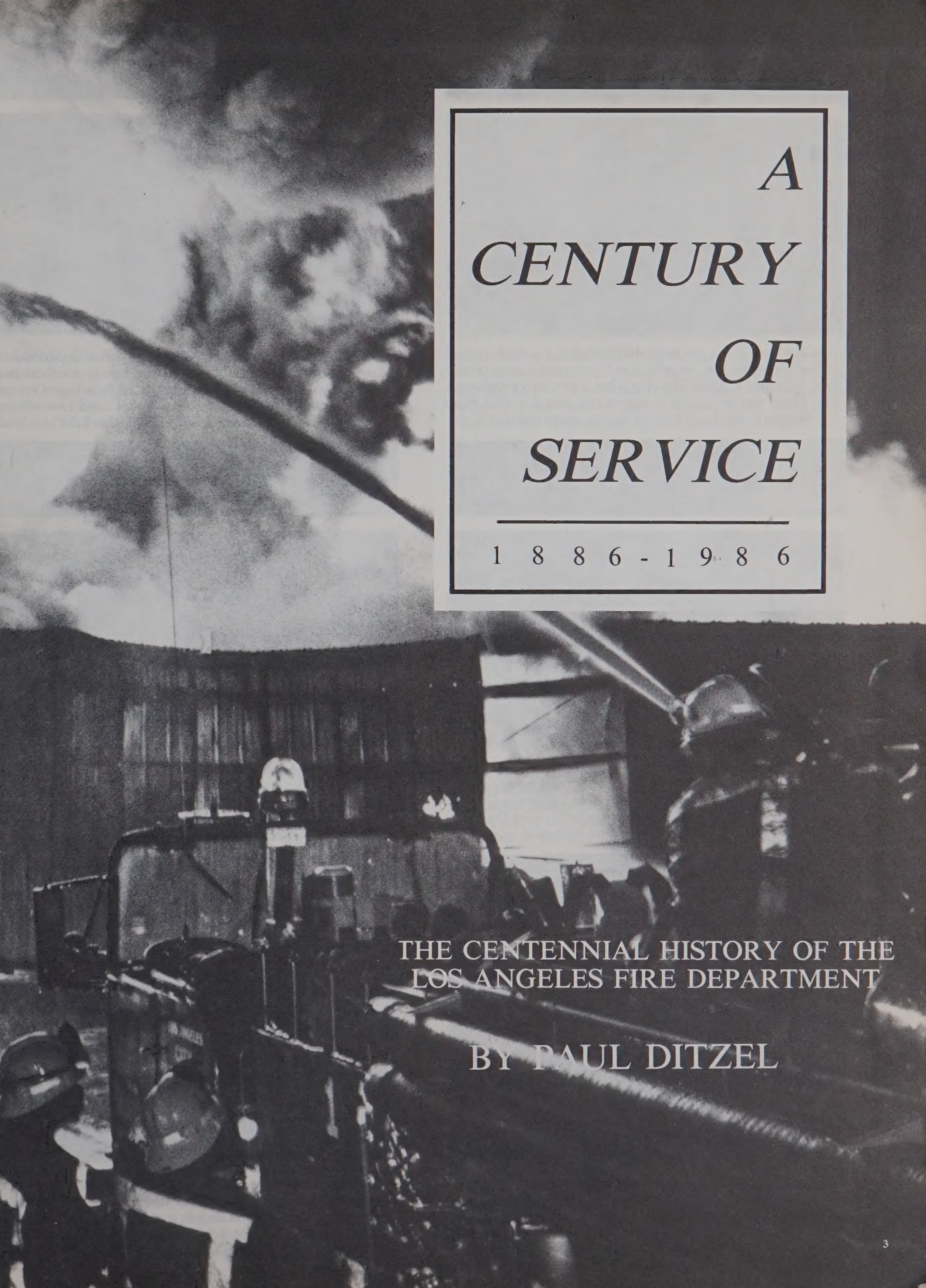
THOMAS JARMAN, ART DIRECTOR
VINCE MARZO, MANAGING EDITOR

FRONT COVER: Twenty companies of LAFD firefighters battled a Major Emergency blaze, late April 5, 1981, in a half-square block of commercial buildings at 5800 South Hoover Street. Incident Commander Darrel Thompson estimated damage at $1 million. Photo courtesy of Mike Meadows.



A CENTURY OF SERVICE

1886-1986

THE CENTENNIAL HISTORY OF THE LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT

BY PAUL DITZEL

FEBRUARY 1
1886

THE DAY THAT MADE BILLY BUFFUM PROUD

PAGE 6 Nobody — not even the firefighters — took special notice when the Los Angeles Fire Department went in service, February 1, 1886. The city often went weeks without a fire. There was no reason to expect one that day. Old Plaza Fire Station firefighters were in for two surprises that night.

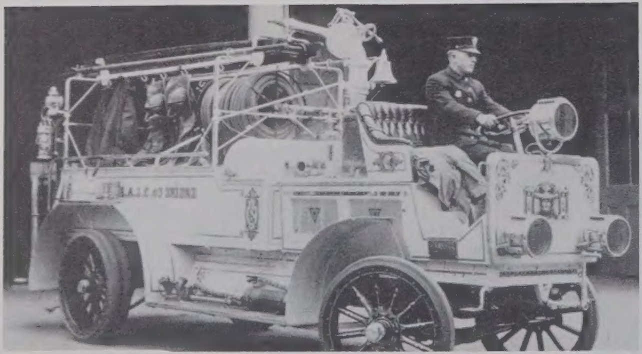
I

"OH, THOSE WERE GLORIOUS TIMES!"

PAGE 13 Did Los Angeles really need a fire department? Many thought not. But those who did, met in a saloon and formed a volunteer fire department. And thus began an era of firefighting, pageantry, parades, hoopla and comraderie. "Oh, those were glorious times!" said "Uncle Jake" Kuhrts.

IV

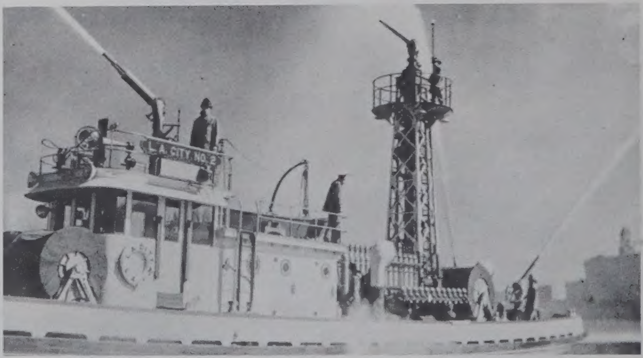
REQUIEM FOR THE HORSES



PAGE 79 The twilight years of the fire horses were marked by a gradual transition to some peculiar looking apparatus. The fire horses were eventually retired to pasture in Griffith Park. On November 6, 1939, firehouse bells tolled the death of Blackie, the last fire horse, who was eulogized in a poem.

V

THE NEW LOOK IN THE OLD DEPARTMENT



PAGE 97 Like sparks from a grinding wheel, Ralph J. Scott's ideas brought a new look to the LAFD: super fire engines, a powerful fireboat, fire awareness, a fire college, rescue and salvage service. He turned the LAFD from a follower of traditional methods into a trendsetter.

VIII

CHARCOAL ALLEYS AND TASK FORCES

PAGE 177 From the ashes of Watts grew the LAFD task force concept of fast, hard-hitting attack. But eight quickly-called task forces were unable to stop flames engulfing the Ponet Square Hotel before they arrived. Nineteen persons died in the fire which led to new built-in fire safety laws.

IX

HAZ-MATS, HIGH-RISES AND ARSON

PAGE 197 As hazardous materials problems increased, firefighters faced greater threats to their lives in an already dangerous job. Further adding to the changing nature of fire problems were blazes in high-rise buildings and an arson epidemic throughout Los Angeles.

II

FIREFIGHTERS GET AN EVERLASTING GIFT

PAGE 33 After the Belmont Hotel burned, an industrial fire would have spread to the Southern Pacific freighthouse, except for firefighters' efforts. In gratitude, the railroad presented a $1000 check. From this seed money sprouted the Los Angeles Firemen's Relief Association.

III

HEYDAY OF THE HORSES

PAGE 53 Fire horses were a special breed. Searchlight, for example, had an uncanny sense for finding the fastest route to fires. The Fire Eater liked to chomp cigars. Unpredictable as humans, one horse refused to answer alarms in the rain. Corn Doctors made house calls to manicure horses.

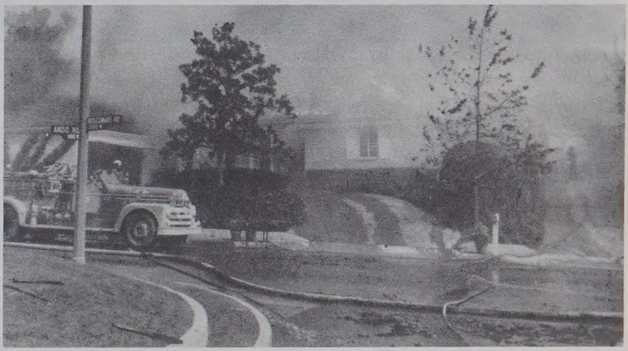
VI

THE RIGHT MAN AT THE RIGHT TIME

PAGE 127 Disasters, such as the *S.S. Markay* explosion, achievements, and the worst turmoil in LAFD history, marked the postwar years. The department won Class 1 status. Segregation of blacks in two fire stations led to enmity, but resulted in department-wide integration.

VII

THE GREAT LAFD RACE AGAINST TIME



PAGE 155 Phenomenal growth, especially in the mountainous brushlands, provided ingredients for the 1961 Bel-Air-Brentwood disaster. That growth endangered the LAFD's Class 1 rating and resulted in a race against time to bolster fire defenses before graders reexamined Los Angeles.

X

YARDSTICKS FOR EXCELLENCE

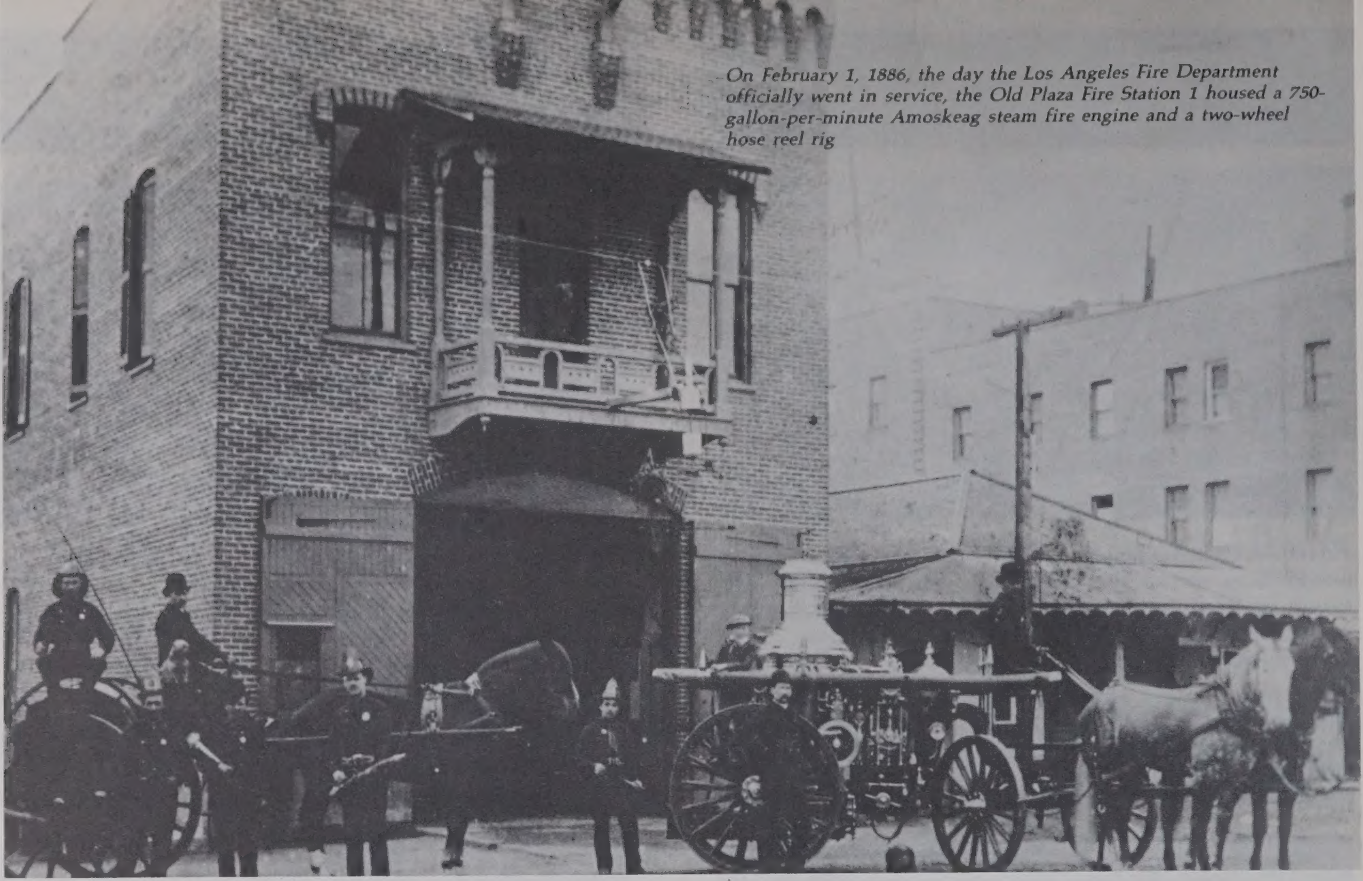
Cugee's Restaurant
Coffee Shop

PAGE 217 Cugee's Restaurant and other arson fires kill more firefighters. Another incendiary fire spreads to a high-rise retirement home. In a classic example of pre-fire planning, built-in fire safety, coordinated firefighting, evacuation and paramedic excellence, 230 people were saved.

FEBRUARY 1
1986

A CENTURY OF SERVICE

PAGE 232 Firefighters, celebrating the LAFD's 100th birthday, February 1, 1986, recalled past fires — such as the Leo Bortz Oil blaze — and wondered what the future held. Little did they know they would soon be called to fight one of the most difficult fires in departmental history.



On February 1, 1886, the day the Los Angeles Fire Department officially went in service, the Old Plaza Fire Station 1 housed a 750-gallon-per-minute Amoskeag steam fire engine and a two-wheel hose reel rig

LAFD PHOTO

PROLOGUE

THE DAY THAT MADE BILLY BUFFUM PROUD

As far as Driver Ed Kinney of Steamer Company No. 1 and the seven other firefighters at Los Angeles' 26 Plaza Street Station in the old pueblo district were concerned, that February 1, 1886, was, with one difference, going to be just another day with little expectancy of alarms. That Monday was different because the Los Angeles Fire Department officially went into service with four stations, two steam-powered 750-gallon-per-minute pumpers, each housed with a two-wheel hose reel; a hook and ladder truck, a hose wagon and 11 horses.

On this day the city began to pay 31 firefighters, including a chief engineer and an assistant chief, for a service which, for 15 years, had been provided virtually without pay by 380 members of the Los Angeles Volunteer Fire Department. Most of the paid, or permanent men as they were officially designated, were former volunteers who took over the existing stations and equipment.

Augmenting the permanent force were 24 reserve firefighters — most likely they were former volunteers, too, who were, starting this day, to be paid a small annual honorarium. These callmen, apportioned among the fire companies, were required to answer all alarms in their station's district, large fires anywhere in the city and drill with their respective outfits at least twice a month.

At 7 a.m., that cool, sunny and breezy day, temperatures were edging to a high of 69 degrees as Kinney, along with Hose Cart Driver Louis Bartol, led the horses from their stalls in the rear of the station and hitched them to the rigs: Two horses to the pumper and one horse to the reel which was more often called a jumper because of the way it bounced while being pulled along the city's largely unpaved, bumpy streets.

The jumper reel carried 250-feet of carbolized hose made of rubber, covered with cotton duck and treated with carbolic acid to prevent mildew and rot. This hose would, as funds became available, gradually replace the department's leather hose with seams joined by copper rivets. Leather hose leaked badly and was, moreover, unsuitable for steamer use because pumping pressures often caused the hose to burst at the seams.

Hour-long hitchups of the horses at 7 a.m., noon and 5 p.m., were required under the Board of Fire Commissioners' newly-enacted list of 39 Rules and Regulations so the firefighters could take turns leaving their stations for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Rule 14 required that one permanent firefighter at each station alternate with the others in posting a round-the-clock fire lookout.

The idea of mealtime hitchups was good. If there was an alarm, the rigs would be ready to go. The city's alarm system was haphazardly crude. It mostly relied upon an alerting procedure, long since discarded elsewhere in the fire service, dating back more then 200 years to colonial Virginia times when musket shots signaled a fire. The alarm was then spread by bells in churches and government buildings. In Philadelphia, for example, what was to become known as the Liberty Bell in Independence Hall, alerted the city to fires before and after the American Revolution. When the Plaza lookout spotted a fire he ran outside, fired the station's blunderbuss to recall absent firefighters and then began tolling the firehouse bell. Lookouts in other stations followed similar procedures.

Los Angeles had telephone service starting in 1882, but few could afford it. Those with telephones quite likely called the police to report fires and they, in turn, sent a patrolman to notify the nearest firehouse. Three years before the LAFD went in service, a fire alarm telegraph system was installed, apparently in the old City Hall on Second Street between Spring and Fort (Broadway) Streets. An alarm turned in from a box sent electrical impulses, corresponding to the number of the box, to the City Hall system of batteries and telegraph equipment.

An alarm from Box 13, for example, would be received as a single electrical impulse, followed by a pause, then three more impulses. The alarm was automatically transmitted by telegraph lines to firehouses. At the same time, the bell in the City Hall tower began striking the number of the box. Both tradition and the fact that boxes were sparsely-located largely accounted for Los Angeles' primary reliance upon gunfire to sound alarms.

The loud blam of the blunderbuss was the signal for passersby and police officers to begin firing their pistols. In those free-wheeling days in Los Angeles, the city of 35,000 was as famous for crime as it was for its temperate climate. Citizens carried guns as later Angelenos carried credit cards. Three shots were the generally-recognized signal for a fire alarm. Gunfire, reverberating up and down city streets, alerted other citizens to begin firing their pistols, too, thus spreading the alarm among the callmen and to other stations if their lookouts had not spotted the fire.

Thrice-daily hitchups meant that drivers were the last to eat. While others were gone and the lookout stood watch, Kinney and Bartol cleaned the horses' stalls, forked in fresh hay, filled the bran buckets and attended to the horses' personal hygiene which included brushing their teeth and scraping their hooves. Drivers probably considered the hitching rule unnecessary, considering the miniscule chance of an alarm.

Records for the years immediately preceding the paid department show that weeks — even months — could pass without an alarm. In 1881, for example, the volunteers answered 33 calls; 15 of them false (most probably caused by gun battles which were mistaken for fires or, as tradition holds, by the volunteers themselves seeking some action). The 18 fires that year resulted in total damages of $920 which were fully-paid by insurance coverage. A fire alarm was so unusual that it was discussed among firefighters for days and perhaps throughout the city as well. Major fires were rare. When they occurred, thousands of spectators quickly jammed streets with their horses, buggies, bicycles, wagons and even the trolley and cable car system could go into a virtual transporation gridlock.

The two-story rectangular red brick Plaza Station, only two years old, was the department's showcase. With the creation of the LAFD, the city renovated the upstairs and provided a rear bedroom for Foreman "Dutch Henry" Scherer, a position corresponding to what would later be known as captain, and a large front sleeping room for Kinney and Bartol, Steamer Engineer Irving Velsir (a brother of a common [city] councilman) and Hosemen John Degnan, O.R. Frohlich, T.J. Kinney (probably the driver's brother) and Sam Dougan.

As Kinney and Bartol shoveled waste from the stalls and brushed the horses' teeth, similar activities were underway at the other stations which, standing in stark contrast to the Plaza, were little more than ramshackle barns, including the one a block away on Aliso Street near Los Angeles Street. Officially designated Hook and Ladder Company No. 1, the firefighters preferred to call it by its volunteer name, Vigilance Hook and Ladder, just as Steamer 1's firefighters called their outfit Original 38's Engine, a name derived from the 38 men who formed the company in the volunteer era.

If Foreman J.W. Hill and the six firefighters assigned to Vigilance resented the favoritism and amenities which, since volunteer times, always seemed to be lavished upon the Plaza Station, they could boast that theirs was a very special rig. The 65- foot Hayes Hook and Ladder, one of the few in the United States at the time, stood as an example of the first practical aerial ladder ever built. Even the New York Fire Department would not get their first Hayes for another five months.

A few blocks south of the Plaza and Vigilance stations was the firehouse on Main near First Streets of Steamer Engine Company No. 2, also better-known by its volunteer moniker, Confidence Engine. Before leaving for breakfast, Engineer Mike Curran who, in seven years would become chief engineer of the department, checked the safety valve on the pumper which was similar in size to the one at the Plaza. He made certain the needle still registered the 80 pounds of pressure required by Rule 3. Boiler water in both engines was kept warm to facilitate a fast buildup of steam so the apparatus could begin pumping within minutes after an alarm. Curran was considered the best mechanic on the department and it was said he knew how to fix anything.

Many blocks south at 512 South Spring Street, which at that time was a suburban residential district, stood the house of Hose Company No. 1 and the two horses that pulled it. The six firefighters there, following tradition, preferred to call their four-wheeled rig by its volunteer name: Park Hose. There were no city funds, nor any perceived need at that time, to bring into the paid department two other fire companies which retained their volunteer status: East Los Angeles Hose Company No. 1 in Boyle Heights at Truman Street near Downey Avenue and Morris Vineyard Hose Company No. 3 at 15th and Hill Streets.

Both areas were sparsely populated, but the city's fast growth would, two years later, result in the absorption of both companies into the LAFD. In the interim, however, both volunteer outfits reported to the Board of Fire Commissioners and it can therefore be assumed they were available to help the paid department if needed.

With the start of the LAFD, a hose company, owned by the Southern Pacific and operated by railroad workers for the four preceding years, was disbanded. It was located near what was then known as the San Fernando Street Depot. The company worked with the volunteers at fires on or near Southern Pacific property. Why the company should be taken out of service, considering the rapid buildup of large, high fire-hazard commercial structures and factories along Southern Pacific trackage, is not known. Cost probably was the reason, plus the railroad undoubtedly felt that its tax payments to the city treasurer entitled it to the same fire protection as the rest of Los Angeles.

Whatever the reason, it would shortly prove to be an unwise decision, although one which would, ironically and indirectly, lead to a major impetus for the formation of what would one day become the Los Angeles Firemen's Relief Association.

There was no hoopla that day to celebrate the in-service start of the LAFD. The ***Los Angeles Times*** did not then publish on Mondays. The following day, a two-line squib buried near the bottom of page one noted: "Walter S. Moore's official duties as chief engineer and fire marshal began yesterday." Deemed more newsworthy were the seven items preceding it, including "A hitching strap at the police station awaits identification", and "Dr. P.P.W. McCurdy is minus a navy-blue overcoat. Sneak thieves."

We can only theorize over the absence of fanfare which usually accompanied the beginning of paid departments in other cities. The most obvious reason is that, except for the fact that firefighters were now being paid, little else had changed in the city's fire protection. Perhaps of significance is the further fact that, except for the Los Angeles business and political establishments and most of the city's newspapers which had long stumped for a paid department, there were some who objected to the idea of their taxes going to pay firefighters to sit idly waiting for fires which rarely occurred, and when they did, were handled with considerable effectiveness and almost without cost, by the Volunteer Fire Department. Perhaps the less said about paying for fire protection, the less chance there was to reopen old wounds.

More than anybody else, the city's political and business infrastructure knew Los Angeles was overdue for a paid fire department. On that first day, the department was protecting the fastest-growing city in America. Six years before the start of the LAFD, the city's population was 11,183. Four years after the LAFD went into service, population soared to more than 50,000. Those infrequent major fires served as portents of catastrophes to come in a rapidly-changing city with even faster changing fire problems.

In 1886, Los Angeles' 30 square miles roughly encompassed an area of structural density only as far north as Ord Street and south to Seventh Street. The easternmost area of building concentration did not extend much past Los Angeles Street and Olive Street on the west. Old Los Angeles, with its traditional single-story adobe buildings, was giving way to wood-frame and brick structures, some taller than four stories. These tinderbox buildings included hotels, commercial and light to heavy manufacturing occupancies, with their attendant life hazard and fire load problems.

As primitive as the alarm system was, the water supply for firefighting was little better. While a private water company had laid underground mains, there were less than 100 hydrants in 1886. Los Angeles heavily relied upon the old zanja system of ditches and mains of hollowed wooden logs which carried Los Angeles River water for domestic consumption as well as to irrigate vineyards, citrus orchards, grain fields and other agricultural endeavors. Further compounding water supply problems was the encroachment of factories, commercial occupancies and houses in these semirural areas, where water volumes and pressures were so low that disastrous fires were inevitable.

Los Angeles' explosive growth started shortly after September 5, 1876, when the Southern Pacific began passenger service to Los Angeles via the San Joaquin Valley link to the transcontinental railroad. Further impetus would come when the Atchison, Topeka, & Santa Fe Railway entered Los Angeles on November 29, 1886, via the southern transcontinental route.

The city's temperate climate, job opportunities and other advantages awaiting easterners were widely advertised by the two railroads during the ensuing rate war between them. One-way fares to Los Angeles dipped to as low as $1 as the railroads fiercely competed to build westbound traffic volumes to the city and eastbound revenue with citrus fruits, grapes and wines. Those who did not come by rail flocked to Los Angeles by steamship. Hotels sent stagecoaches to meet the ships at the Wilmington docks.

Tourism was a high-growth industry as hotels dotted Main Street and Broadway. The city became famous for the number of its saloons and recreational pursuits, legal and illegal. Among the most elegant of the city's many hotels was the wood-framed Belmont atop Bunker Hill. It was as posh as it was ripe for burning, but nobody thought of that possibility, considering the panoramic view in those smogless days.

The Belmont's guests were particularly amused when the echoes of pistol shots signaled a fire alarm. From that vista, according to a contemporary account, guests watched "all the different directions the fire companies take in hunting up the lost fire. At times they will be a mile apart, going full speed in opposite directions." Perhaps the spectacle was amusing, but the day was not distant when those pistol shots signaled the destruction of the Belmont.

By 8 o'clock that morning, all firefighters had returned from breakfast. After exercising the horses for one hour, a Rule 9 requirement on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, boredom set in among the firefighters. There was only so much drilling they could do. They felt they had honed their skills while serving as volunteers. There were, of course, no radio, television, or videotape players and the city's several newspapers were quickly read.

Rule 19 prohibited "loud or boisterous talking, profane or obscene language . . . (and) intoxicating liquors must not be kept or allowed to be drank (sic) . . . and gambling is strictly prohibited." Firehouse visitors were discouraged and station doors were required to be closed on Sundays which, especially in summer, would keep visitors outside and flies and the smell of horses inside.

Except for fires, drills, checking hydrants, exercising horses, and other LAFD business, the firefighters were not permitted to leave their stations except at mealtimes. Several years later the Plaza firefighters boasted the longest any of them had been away from their station on any but official duties was 12 minutes. The only exceptions were Chief Engineer Moore and Assistant Chief Dan A. Moriarty. Moore made his headquarters at Confidence Engine and Moriarty at the Plaza. They spent nights at home with their families.

What manner of men were these first LAFD firefighters who that day began a tradition which was to lead, during the following century, to a preeminent firefighting, fire prevention and emergency medical service organization unlike any the world has ever seen? Where did these first firefighters come from? Why did they choose the ascetic life of a firefighter, confined around-the-clock to seemingly endless days of dull existence in less than desirable living environments, required to follow a rigid regimen, with apparently no hope for a social life, much less marriage and a family?

When they would be called out to severe fires, they would, moreover, put their lives in severe jeopardy in a city whose alarm system often resulted in long delays which gave incipient fires plenty of time to propagate, a city with an inadequate water supply for firefighting and undependable hose. Not only that, but LAFD firefighters were expected to do battle without protective firefighting clothing. Not even helmets.

Answers to these questions are all the more puzzling upon first examination, considering Los Angeles' expanding growth and the attendant implication of opportunities, the city's devil-may-care lifestyle, and the gambler's instinct that could quickly make a saloon keeper — Billy Buffum was probably the best example — wealthy through land speculation.

We know a lot about the first chief engineer, but little about the first rank-and-filers. Moore was 35 when he was elected chief engineer by the fire commission. Born and educated in Philadelphia, he traced his ancestry to those who fought in the American Revolution.

While still a teenager, Moore became a runner for Philadelphia's Engine Company No. 18. Runners were generally the youngest members of a volunteer outfit. Their duty was to run ahead of the company while yelling or tootling a trumpet to clear a path while seeking the quickest route for the volunteers following not far behind them and who were tugging at the ropes that pulled the hand pumper. At night the runners carried torches to light the way. Runners could one day hope to be promoted to the honor of pulling the apparatus or, even better, being elected foreman by their peers.

The LAFD's first chief engineer probably came west shortly after the 1869 completion of the transcontinental railroad. There is evidence he settled in San Francisco and, like so many other eastern volunteers who trekked west, joined that city's volunteer fire department. From San Francisco, he journeyed to Los Angeles where he became active with Confidence Engine. As an 11-year member of Confidence, he worked himself up to various elected offices, including that of fire company president, a position he held for five years.

Moore was elected chief engineer of the Volunteer Fire Department three years prior to the creation of the LAFD and was subsequently appointed as the first secretary of the board of fire commissioners. He held that position only a short time before he was named chief engineer at a monthly salary of $125.

WALTER S. MOORE
First Chief Engineer

LAFD PHOTO

We know comparatively little about Assistant Chief Moriarty, except that he, too, was a former volunteer and was paid $50 a month, which suggests that his was a part-time job whose primary responsibility was to answer all fire alarms and make weekly inspections. Two years later, he would become the LAFD's fourth chief engineer. Moriarty was uniquely remembered for a duty-connected disability. But we get ahead of our story.

History is cloudy on the point, but we can, from piecemeal examinations of the circumstances of those times, probably come close to portraying these first rank-and-filers while explaining why they chose to join the LAFD. We know, of course, of their Los Angeles volunteer firefighting background. There is abundant evidence that most of them were volunteers in San Francisco and eastern cities before they rode the rails, stages and steamships to Los Angeles. Firefighting therefore held a special interest for them. We also know they had to be at least 21 and speak "passable" English, according to rulebook requirements. Unlike eastern fire department traditions, the ranks were not heavy with recent immigrants, notably Irish and Italians who sought a more prosperous life in America.

We can only wonder, moreover, to what extent pay lured them to the LAFD. Engineers in charge of steamers got $100 a month; foremen only slightly more. Drivers were paid $70, and the department's only tillerman received $60. Assuming the validity of contemporary claims that their salaries were comparable to those paid other Los Angeles workers, we have to ask why they would opt to work far more hours as firefighters if they could earn similar pay at other jobs requiring less time.

A partial answer derives from the fact that job opportunities advertised by the railroads and others intent upon building Southern California's growth were vastly overstated. The flood of easterners to Los Angeles was overwhelming the employment needs in a city whose economy was largely agricultural. It is therefore quite probable that most of these first LAFD members could not find better-paying work and did not have money for rail fare home. So they hired on as firefighters.

Certainly, there was at that time no job security, sick leave, vacation time, pensions or other benefits to make the work attractive. Although officially known as permanent firefighters, the term was a misnomer in those days before civil service. Rank-and-filers could, for whatever whim or reason of their foremen, the chief engineer, the assistant chief, any one of the three-member Board of Fire Commissioners — Moore, City Council President Hiram Sinsabaugh, and Mayor Edward F. Spense — be discharged with no resort to appeal from punishment, deserved or not.

Despite the rapid growth of the city, there seemed little opportunity for promotion because the council had limited the size of the department. Evidence strongly suggests that promotions often went to those favored by the city administration. A gulf existed between the firefighters and the chief engineer and assistant chief, who maintained their political and fraternal associations, which could lead them to better jobs inside and out of the department.

These first firefighters obviously were frugal if for no other reason than they had little discretionary income and had to wait to collect their pay at City Hall at the end of each month. They somehow had to bankroll the cost of the officially stipulated uniforms from a San Francisco supplier. The uniforms were of navy blue cloth consisting of a sack coat, vest, trousers and a black felt hat. The coat and hat were required to have brass buttons engraved with the letters, "F.D." Because the firefighters were required to be in full uniform at least until noon, they certainly worried where they would find the wherewithal to replace their uniforms if they ruined them while fighting fires.

If the city demanded a spit-and-polish image in the stations, it cared very little about the firefighters' safety on the fireground. Any old clothing would do while they faced the dangers of firefighting. Moore, himself, recognized this shortcoming. Among his earliest goals was to demand the city at least buy the firefighters leather helmets.

Firefighters were, moreover, subject to as stiff a set of regulations as governed any department in America. Fines ran as high as $2.50 per infraction: a hefty sum for a $70-a-month firefighter. This money went into what Rule 26 termed a Relief Fund with a fire commissioner serving as treasurer. This money was intended to care for the firefighters in the event of duty-related injuries. Fines obviously were to be avoided and so the amount in the relief fund was inconsequential. If the firefighters became ill, wanted time off, or a vacation, they had to pay a callman in advance to work for them.

If the firefighters were looking for glamor and excitement, they knew from experience they were unlikely to find the kind of action as seen by eastern firefighters who inspired Currier & Ives lithographs, songs, marches, plays and books extolling their feats.

We can target in on at least one significant explanation for these first firefighters throwing in their lot with the LAFD by examining American history in general and Los Angeles history in particular. The rigid set of Rules and Regulations, the confinement to small, unpleasant quarters and their willingness to unhesitatingly accept authority, strongly suggest that the first LAFD members would be almost certain candidates for a military career.

But those were not normal times. The western wars with the Indians were winding down and with them the need for a large army or cavalry. There were not, moreover, severe international threats to justify a large standing Army. The Navy offered still less inducements. Immediately after the Civil War the fleet dropped from 626 vessels to 30 and the service was scandalized by shipboard brutalities by officers and mutinies among crewmen. Ergo: The man who might in other times choose a career in the Army, Navy, and especially the Cavalry could quite easily adjust to small firehouses and big horses.

A motive which might largely explain why they chose the LAFD is the fact that the men did not have to pay for housing, then as now, a major monthly outlay. Rather than lacking ambition, as some claim, the first firefighters were anything but that, and quite likely saw the LAFD as an interim job which would enable them to squirrel away sufficient money until such time as they could buy a ticket home or pursue the widely-advertised good life in Los Angeles.

Supporting this theory is an examination of early departmental rosters which indicate a high turnover. We learn from the later recollections of these first firefighters that considerable numbers of them found jobs elsewhere; frequently in government and police-related occupations and particularly among the railroads. Engineers of the steam pumpers found employment in locomotive cabs. The firefighters who stoked the pumpers' boilers could just as readily become engine firemen shoveling coal in the approaching era of American steam railroading.

Boredom, punctuated by the occasional snorting of the horses as they chomped their bran, shrouded the firehouse as darkness settled over Los Angeles that first day of the paid department. The horses were hitched at dinnertime, unhitched an hour later at 6 p.m., and led back to their stalls.

Thirty minutes later, as the men were bedding down for the night, the LAFD's first alarm of fire was sounded. We do not know how it was turned in, but it seems probable it was almost simultaneously spotted by lookouts at the Plaza and Vigilance stations. A large orange glare, crowned by smoke, was seen etching the darkness off to the east.

The Plaza blunderbuss was fired and the bell rung. Pistol shots rang out. As Kinney slid the brass pole, the chains across the horse stalls were dropped. The horses, true to their training during volunteer days, bolted from their stalls and backed toward the steamer and the jumper rig. Kinney climbed into his seat and, tugging at a rope just above his head, caused the hanging harness to drop over the horses. Bartol did likewise and other firefighters quickly completed the hitchups.

Engineer Velsir lighted a fluff of cotton waste and flipped it into the steamer's firebox where it landed on a mixture of wood shavings and cannel coal, a type of soft coal used throughout the fire service because of its fast ignition capabilities. Although it was going to be a long run to the distant loomup, Engine 1 would be ready to begin pumping in about two minutes.

Kinney tugged at another rope. The doors swung open and, with a crack of his whip, the horses took off and turned east. The pumper, with smoke already funneling from its stack, was immediately followed by the jumper reel which jounced as it hit bump after bump in the rutted streets. Other companies were similarly clanging toward the heightening glow in the sky.

As his buggy raced through the streets, Assistant Chief Moriarty whipped his horse to greater speed. From what he could see, it looked like this had the makings of a major fire. While accounts are silent on the point, we can assume that the apparent severity of the fire and the concern it caused throughout the city, caused police to ask the phone operator to ring number 52 and notify Moore at his home at Pico Boulevard and Figueroa Street. Although he was not required to go until the second alarm, he most likely answered the alarm, too.

As firefighters converged on the fire, they saw it was in brush near the County Hospital at 1100 North Mission Boulevard. Fortunately, winds were slight and the low February temperatures had not created pre-heating conditions. The fire, while spectacular, was not moving fast. The main problem was water which was supplied by the zanja irrigation ditches. With the help of other companies, callmen and perhaps the East Los Angeles and Morris Vineyard volunteers, the Plaza firefighters eventually surrounded and snuffed the fire.

But it was a grueling battle and the weary, smoke-grimed firefighters did not return to their stations until late that night. The next day, they would read the ***Los Angeles Times*** account which chastised those responsible for the fire: "It is unlawful to light such fires after nightfall and the police will make an example of the first offender they catch at it."

The night of the first day of the LAFD was going to be long and difficult. In the Plaza station, as at the other firehouses, Kinney and the other drivers had to walk the sweat-streaked horses to calm them down after their exertions, then wipe and comb them, feed and water them and otherwise prepare for the next run. Hose had to be cleaned and rewound on the reels while the engineers went over the pumpers' valves and other mechanisms, lubed the rigs and made certain kindling wood and cannel coal was in readiness for the next alarm. Finally, they checked the safety gauges.

As did foremen at other stations, Scherer called the Plaza roll of permanent and callmen, dutifully made appropriate entries in his journal, then dismissed the men. As the callmen left for home, everyone remarked on the one-in-a-million chance they would have caught an alarm, much less a working fire, on the very first day the LAFD went into service.

At 2:10 a.m., a few hours later, firefighters at the Plaza and other stations were awakened by pistol shots. The alarm came from the hotel and commercial district along North Main Street. Plaza and Confidence firefighters arrived at the fire at about the same time and found smoke coming from the first floor doors and windows of the Grand Central Hotel, 224 North Main Street near Arcadia Street, one of the city's best-known resort hotels. Windows of the three-story brick hotel, a 75-by-100 foot building with wood floors, open staircases and without sprinklers, were filled with terrified guests awakened by the clamor of fire apparatus and the rapid buildup of smoke and heat.

Vigilance Hook and Ladder quickly clattered up to the building and prepared to raise the 65-foot aerial to start rescue operations as firefighters pulled hose from the jumper reels and began leading out their lines into the smoke-filled Dillman's Saloon in the hotel. Engineers of the two steamers, their gauges showing they were ready to begin pumping, took suction at nearby hydrants supplied by a 22-inch and an eight-inch main running down the center of Main Street. Hydrant pressure was a satisfactory 45 pounds. Even as the engineers tightened their suction hose connections they heard the clanging approach of Park Hose Company.

When Moriarty arrived, he knew they would have to nip this one fast. Those open interior wood stairways could provide chimneys for the heated gases to spread upward and mushroom along the third floors while preparing to bank down to the lower floors. Should he call for a second alarm immediately or see how well the initial attack succeeded? Fire was extending from Dillman's into the hotel's baggage room where a large quantity of luggage was being consumed. Flames also were invading G.F. Ford's small furniture store in the hotel. Moriarty felt some optimism as he sized up the exposures. On the north, a three-story brick building housed a first floor restaurant. The southern exposure stood similar in size and construction and was occupied by a mortuary. The brick walls would likely prevent extension of the fire.

While we have no idea what must have passed through Moriarty's mind during those tense moments, surely it must have occurred to him that a catastrophic loss of life during the first 24 hours of the paid department's existence would be seized upon by those who opposed the replacement of the volunteers by the LAFD. Since the city was founded by the Spanish in 1781, Los Angeles had never suffered a large loss of lives in a fire. The Grand Central had been ripe for burning ever since it was built a few years earlier. That it had not gone up in flames sooner was pure luck.

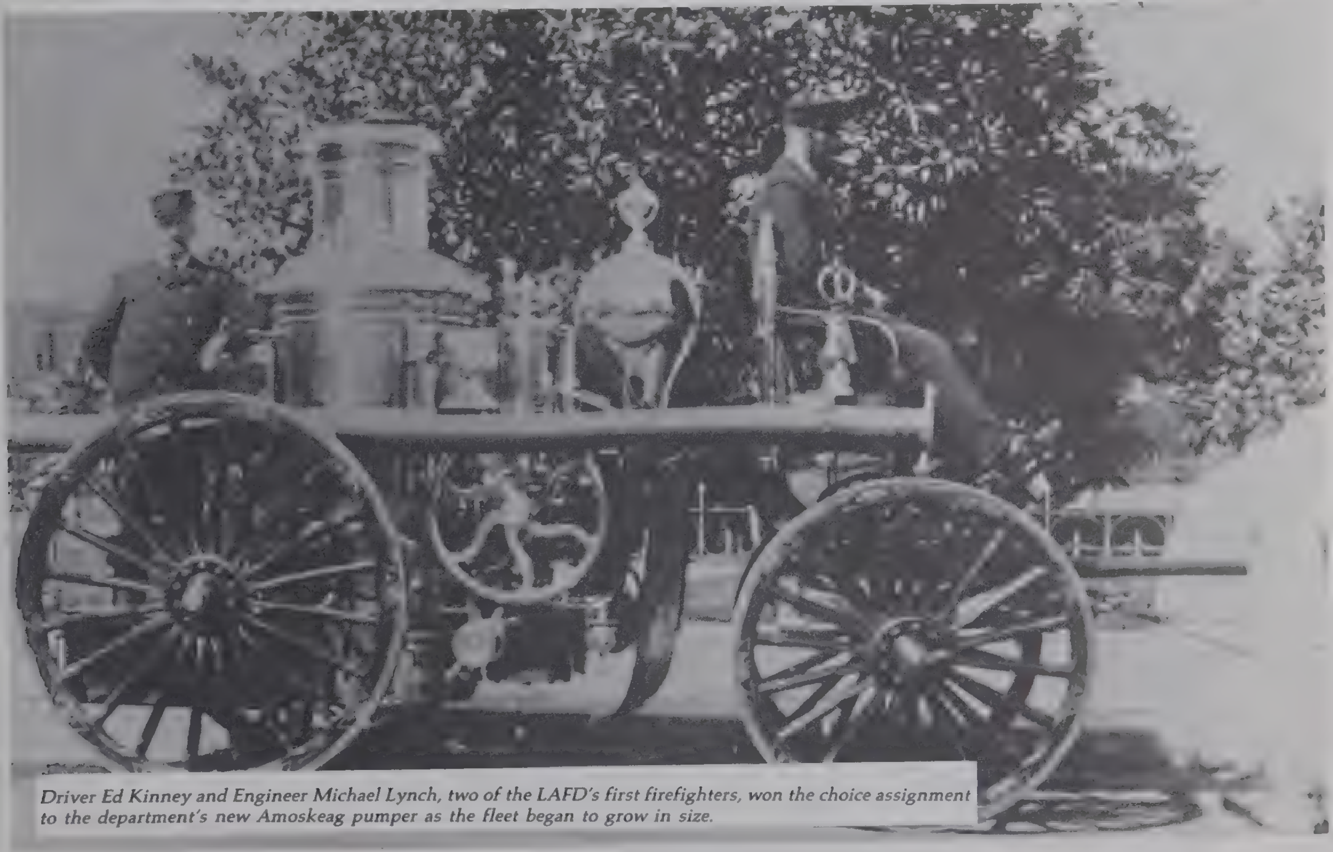
Firefighters quickly and methodically went about their business of attacking the fire. Both their experience as volunteers and their knowledge of the Rules and Regulations was evident. Exactly as Rule 7 stated, the hose cart drivers, after lines were laid, hurried over to the steamers and began stoking them with coal kept in a small box immediately behind the boiler and otherwise helped the engineers.

Teamwork among the men at the engines and those on the nozzles, together with the work of Vigilance truckmen, soon checked the spreading flames and made a fast stop without injuries to hotel guests or firefighters. Moriarty determined from the night clerk that the fire started when a lighted kerosine lamp exploded; a common cause of fires in Los Angeles in the 1880s. Loss was held at $1000, sizeable in those times, but remarkably low considering the disaster potential built into the hotel.

Dawn was approaching as the bone-weary firefighters returned to their stations and repeated the cleanup jobs they had done a few hours earlier. Kinney once again tended his horses. Later, as he wearily climbed the Plaza station's stairs to the bunkroom, Kinney undoubtedly pondered the extraordinary fact that the first day of the LAFD recorded not one, but two fires and that both of them were handled in an efficient manner. He also contemplated the lesson every firefighter quickly learns: Expect the unexpected.

Maybe this job was not going to be as boring as Kinney expected. Maybe he would stick around longer than he originally planned. Kinney did and, several years later, was awarded the plum of being chosen as driver of one of the first new pumpers purchased by the LAFD. And Kinney could, as did thousands of Los Angeles firefighters who would follow him during the next 100 years, experience the distinct sense of pride in a job well done that only a firefighter can appreciate. Said, the ***Times'*** report on the Grand Central Hotel fire: "The department turned out in good shape . . . and extinguished the fire without particular difficulty."

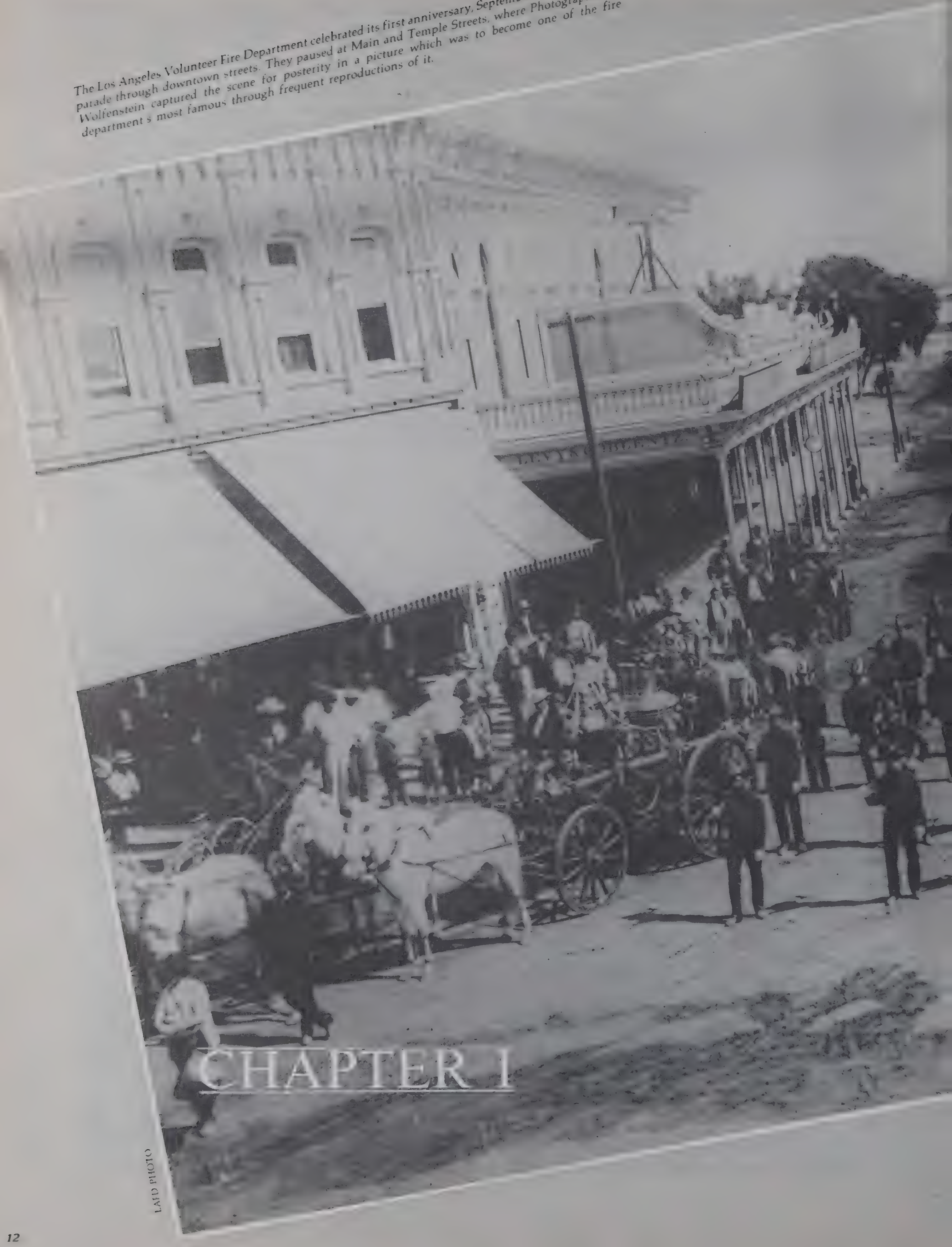
Billy Buffum, long since living in wealthy retirement from his land investments, smiled proudly when he read that.



FROM THE COLLECTION OF BRUCE NORMAN

Driver Ed Kinney and Engineer Michael Lynch, two of the LAFD's first firefighters, won the choice assignment to the department's new Amoskeag pumper as the fleet began to grow in size.

The Los Angeles Volunteer Fire Department celebrated its first anniversary, September 30, 1872, with a parade through downtown streets. They paused at Main and Temple Streets, where Photographer V. Wolfenstein captured the scene for posterity in a picture which was to become one of the fire department's most famous through frequent reproductions of it.



LAFD PHOTO

CHAPTER I

"OH, THOSE WERE GLORIOUS TIMES!"

It would be a serious mistake to dismiss 35-year-old William Mansfield Buffum as just another saloon keeper in Los Angeles where, in 1869, there were 110 emporiums dispensing whiskey and schooners of beer. Los Angeles laid claim to having more saloons per capita than any other city in the United States.

Everybody knew William Mansfield Buffum, but nobody called him that. To mayors, councilmen, judges, lawyers, merchants, real estate promoters and anybody of stature in the city, he was known as Billy Buffum.

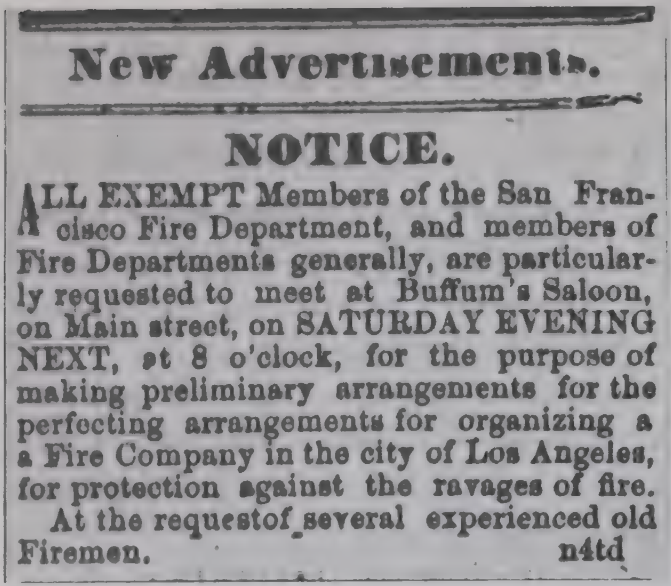
City Hall was the official seat of local government, but Billy Buffum's Saloon was the focal point for the political, business and legal establishment to meet, to be seen, to concoct deals, learn what was *really* happening in the city and get advance information long before it became publicly known. At Billy Buffum's, too, the city's power structure selected election slates and helped to legitimize the candidates into office via the saloon's ballot box.

Buffum knew virtually everything that was going on in Los Angeles, who was doing what, when, where and to whom, but he kept his mouth shut while building strong confidences among everyone from law officers to heads of department stores. Except that he preferred to stay out of the limelight, Billy Buffum probably could have been elected mayor. He was, in short, a consummate behind-the-scenes power-broker operating out of his single-story saloon at 57 North Main Street, just above Temple Street, where the Federal Courthouse Building stands today.

Buffum, the pragmatist, knew, moreover, that his saloon had to offer a suitable ambience if he was to retain his appeal to the city's elite. A ***Los Angeles News*** article described the saloon as "a glittering social center . . . We venture to say that there is not a more elegant and tastefully arranged place of the sort on the coast. The mirrors, the engravings and paintings that adorn the walls, the arrangement of the gas jets, the cozy little tables . . . the neat carpeting, in short, the whole interior finish, is first class. The saloon would be an ornament even in Montgomery Street, San Francisco."

Buffum's portliness suggested he spent many hours over many schooners of beer while absorbing everything there was to know about Los Angeles. A man of incredible foresight, Buffum was among the first to recognize the potential for greatness that laid dormant in Los Angeles. His vision was not altogether altruistic, as evidenced by his uncanny ability to convert scraps of information gleaned in his saloon into decisions to buy seemingly worthless land cheaply and, in a year or two, sell it for many times what he paid for it.

Nobody among the city's shakers-and-movers doubted that if Billy Buffum gave his support, covert or not, to an idea that would benefit the city, it was almost certainly guaranteed to succeed. Slight wonder, therefore, that Billy Buffum's was the place chosen by a group of leading citizens for a meeting to discuss a fire department. They placed this classified advertisement in local newspapers:



New Advertisements.

NOTICE.

ALL EXEMPT Members of the San Francisco Fire Department, and members of Fire Departments generally, are particularly requested to meet at Buffum's Saloon, on Main street, on SATURDAY EVENING NEXT, at 8 o'clock, for the purpose of making preliminary arrangements for the perfecting arrangements for organizing a a Fire Company in the city of Los Angeles, for protection against the ravages of fire.

At the requestof several experienced old Firemen. n4td

LAFD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Exempt volunteers were those who, having served a number of years as firefighters, were excused from military service, jury duty and other obligations. At least 13 men, mostly prominent storekeepers and property owners, interested in forming the first organized fire company in Los Angeles, and which would be based upon their volunteer firefighting experience in San Francisco and eastern cities from which they came, met in Buffum's that Saturday night, November 6, 1869. Henry Wartenberg, co-owner of the Kalisher and Wartenberg department store, was elected president; W.A. Mix was chosen vice president; George M. Fall, best known as Los Angeles County Clerk, was elected secretary, and John H. Gregory was named treasurer.

While minutes of the meeting are apparently lost, the ***Los Angeles Daily Star*** provided a brief account which said 13 men submitted applications to become volunteer firefighters. It included E.C. Phelps, who agreed to contact the San Francisco Fire Department to learn what an appropriately-sized fire engine and hose carriage would cost. A committee was formed to select a name. Engine Company No. 1 eventually won out. Those present also voted to start looking for a place to house the apparatus and to start a subscription drive to buy the engine. Many contemporary records leave no doubt that Billy Buffum contributed a hefty sum, but as was typical of him, he made certain that the exact amount would never be known. Certain, too, is the fact that Buffum used his influence to get other saloon keepers to contribute.

There was much other business to discuss and the evening undoubtedly was a long one, as these former volunteer firefighters examined fire protection in Los Angeles up to that time, and surely noted, moreover, the low priority it held. During the 88 years since the pueblo's city founding, firefighting mostly relied upon bucket brigades, with water supplied by the Los Angeles River which fed a crude system of zanjas (ditches) for domestic water supply and agricultural irrigation, dams and water wheels for raising the supply to the city's hills. Peons and Indians apparently were forced by law enforcement officers and zanjeros (zanja superintendents) to help citizens pass the buckets during those infrequent fires which were under command of lawmen who fired pistols to sound alarms. The city's largely adobe construction, fortunately, was mainly responsible for the low incidence of fires.

The Los Angeles City Charter of 1850 empowered authorities to create "a fire department and to make regulations to prevent and extinguish fires." There was, however, little interest among city officials in forming a fire department. Fire regulations were largely ignored although law officers were charged with the responsibility of enforcing them. This situation was not lost upon fire insurance companies which declined coverage in the city until the New England Fire Insurance Company began writing policies about 10 years later.

Perhaps that positional change, which soon led other insurance companies to open agencies in Los Angeles, was occasioned by the Los Angeles Water Company's construction of an improved distribution system starting in 1857 with the laying of the city's first underground water main system of hollowed logs, together with a gigantic wooden water wheel which boosted pressures. Los Angeles Water also built a brick-and-wood storage tank near the Plaza, immediately west of Alameda Street.

There is evidence, moreover, that Francis Mellus, a department store owner who was active in government, bought a fire engine, described only as a small cart. Perhaps this was the rig that Charles McClean, formerly a Los Angeles volunteer firefighter, referred to in his 1911 recollection of a four-wheeled hand-pumper that was pulled to fires by volunteers. McClean said it required 20 men — 10 on each side of the apparatus — to stroke the horizontally-mounted pump handles up-and-down while producing a stream supplied by a hose connected to a hydrant or inserted in a zanja. It is not known where the wooden cart was housed.

One recollection, written around half a century later, describes a sophisticated, for that time, wooden fire engine with fore-and-aft-pumping handles, similar to the so-called Philadelphia-style engines first built in that city in 1768. Fire historians doubt the authenticity of that recollection. Still another account claims Los Angeles had a pumper which was a combination hand-pumped and steam-operated engine. If so, which seems highly unlikely, it was a one-of-a-kind rig never known by fire historians in use anywhere in the United States.

Perhaps, too, fire insurance coverage was offered because so-called fireproof buildings were being built in Los Angeles starting around 1854 with corrugated iron serving as the chief construction material. About this time, brick buildings began to appear as Los Angeles approached the brink of phenomenal growth.

Whatever the case, none of these improvements prevented the worst fire in the city's history up to that time when, on February 25, 1858, flames destroyed the large Childs & Hicks Hardware Store at 21 Los Angeles Street. Compared to today's values, the $50,000 loss was catastrophic. "The volunteer bucket brigade prevented a general conflagration," wrote Harris Newmark in his 1916 book, ***"Sixty Years in California: 1853-1913."*** Newmark, who suggests he saw the fire when he was a child, is regarded by historians as accurate a Los Angeles historian as there was at the time. Perhaps significantly, Newmark makes no mention of a hand-operated engine at the fire. He notes, moreover, that the fire "demonstrated the need of a fire engine."

Fresh in the minds of those at Buffum's Saloon that night was an even worse blaze, July 13, 1867, which leveled Bell's Block of mostly commercial buildings along the east side of Los Angeles Street between Aliso and First Streets. Losses were put at $64,000.

The Buffum's meeting pointedly brought out that with the completion that year of the transcontinental railroad, it was only a matter of time before the Southern Pacific laid tracks to Los Angeles and the Santa Fe would soon follow, thus spurring greater growth in the city. More people meant more buildings, and the combination of the two equated to more and larger fires. Nor was the fact lost upon the volunteers' contemplations that this same year marked the start of the paid Los

Angeles Police Department. They recognized that crime was the major problem confronting the city, but they also recognized the growing potential for disastrous fires required similar priority attention.

Probably, too, the Buffum meeting brought out that, as perilous as the situation was becoming in Los Angeles and, with their homes, stores and businesses largely at the mercy of fires, they were far better off than friends in the San Fernando Valley. Thankfully, they would have observed, Los Angeles did not have the valley's brush fire problems, and it was unlikely the city ever would.

Starting with the days of Spanish explorations, early visitors saw gigantic brush fires in the valley and, little realizing they were nature's way of regenerating the ground cover, called the area, "The Valley of Smokes." Referring to the valley's problem about that time, Newmark recalled:

"A fire broke out in the San Fernando Valley in the middle of July and spread so rapidly that a square mile and a half of territory was denuded and charred. Not only were there no organized means to fight such fires, but men were compelled to sound the alarm through couriers on horseback; and if the wind happened to be blowing across the plains, even the fleetest horseman had all he could do to avoid the flames and reach in time the widely separated rancheros."

With much optimism, the volunteers adjourned their meeting in Buffum's Saloon that night after agreeing to meet there again a week later. Their perceived need for fire protection was dramatically demonstrated the following month when a severe blaze all but destroyed Thomas E. Rowan's American Bakery at the southwest corner of First and Main Streets. The bakery had become a city landmark. It was the only cracker factory in the city and was renowned for the elegance of its birthday and wedding cakes.

During another meeting at Buffum's, Phelps reported he had heard from the San Francisco Fire Department. They recommended that the volunteers acquire a 750-gallon-per-minute Amoskeag pumper and a jumper hose rig similar to the type favored by the Bay City. The recommendation was an excellent one and marked the first, but surely not the last, time Los Angeles firefighters would turn to San Francisco for guidance on apparatus requirements.

The name Amoskeag was, to the fire service of that era, symbolic of the fame that American LaFrance would one day achieve. The Amoskeag Manufacturing Company factory in Manchester, New Hampshire, began building fire engines in 1859 as an adjunct to its primary business of making railroad locomotives and textile machinery. The quality and reliability of Amoskeag apparatus made them popular. Close to 900 of these pumpers were sold worldwide; more than any other delivered by the several dozen steam fire engine manufacturers.

San Francisco's recommendation buoyed the volunteers' enthusiasm as they savored the prospect of shortly operating the very finest fire engine: the first Amoskeag in the southwestern United States. They were, moreover, convinced that the American Bakery fire would help in many ways to make it obvious to everyone that superior fire protection should top the city's priority list. They knew, too, that they could count upon the support of Tom Rowan, the bakery's owner, whose family had earlier experienced a major fire in their San Francisco store. Rowan was also politically ambitious and well on his way to eventually being elected mayor of Los Angeles.

The volunteers' enthusiasm was matched only by their naivete, as the failure of their first fund-raising drive demonstrated. They turned for help to the Common (City) Council. While councilmen were largely sympathetic to their entreaties, they rejected the volunteers' petition. Los Angeles was facing a growing debt which would, in three years, amount to $211,935, plus interest costs.

Long into the night during their weekly meetings at Buffum's, the volunteers discussed ways to raise $3000, despite their realization that a fire engine for Los Angeles was a long way off. Not one bit was their dedication dampened, however, even if they knew with total certainty: Without a lot of fires there was not going to be a lot of interest in anteing up $3000 for a fire engine for those once-in-awhile fires. There were extra costs to be considered; horses, feed, harnesses, hose, other equipment and coal to fuel the boiler. And where would the money come from to build a firehouse for that elusive fire engine?

The reality of it all was that many citizens seemed to consider a properly-outfitted fire engine company an unnecessary extravagance. One Los Angeles newspaper went so far as to say that a fire department was a fine idea for a city like San Francisco, which liked to put on snooty airs, but whoever wanted a fire engine in Los Angeles should pay for it. With Engine Company No. 1 existing only on paper and in the imaginations of the volunteers, they turned their attention from the prospects of fighting fires to fighting public apathy.

They appealed once more to Buffum who again contacted saloon keepers. His was a hard sell. Buffum's political muscle was only able to get the owners to contribute a bit more and that grudgingly, considering that saloon fires rarely occurred. Their attitude was largely shared throughout the city: Fire was something that happened to somebody else.

Movers and shakers the volunteers might have been, but they had a similarly difficult time coaxing money from local businessmen. Their response can best be summed up by their consensus that they were mostly well-insured against fire. They claimed their premises were kept as fire safe as humanly possible and they were, moreover, occupying what they referred to as fireproof buildings, mostly made of brick. Why,

Los Angeles' first steam-operated fire engine and its two-wheel hose reel marked the start of the fire department's emphasis upon two-piece engine companies.

LAFD PHOTO

they asked, should they pay for somebody else's carelessness in a city where smoking around hay barns and misuse of kerosine lamps were the two leading causes of fire? If Los Angeles was going to buy a fire engine, make those who were causing fires pay for it.

The volunteers pondered that idea and concluded that the methods justified the need. With the cooperation of law agencies, fund-raising was turned into a system of enforcing fines levied against those people who could least defend themselves against accusations of fire-setting whether accidental or deliberate: peons, Indians, Mexicans, Chinese, miners and the city's lowlife, especially prostitutes.

And thus the fire engine fund grew, however slowly. The system was not fair and was, purely and simply, a legalized shakedown. But it certainly indicated how badly the volunteers wanted that fire engine. Their efforts were largely supported by local newspapers, although seemingly only after a major fire involving property owned or occupied by prominent citizens. One example was the blaze that occurred shortly after 8 a.m., November 21, 1870, when the large brick and wood home of Isaias Wolf Hellman, a prominent dry goods store owner, banker and political activist, was all but destroyed on San Pedro Street.

Three days later the ***Los Angeles Daily Star*** editorialized: "The usual talk about organizing a fire company has been indulged in. It will, as usual, end in talk." The newspaper also reported that Charles H. Lee, a circus operator who put up his tent near where the ***Los Angeles Times*** Building would eventually stand, "is determined to contribute to the organization, and for that purpose is prepared to give a benefit whenever it shall be resolved on. This is a move in the right direction, and entitles Mr. Lee to the respect and appreciation of the community." Whether the circus benefit was held is not known.

The volunteers' persistence finally began to bear fruit when the council, apparently reasoning that if the city was going into debt it might as well go a bit deeper, voted $665 "in gold coin or equivalent scrip" while accepting Peter Smith's low bid to build a one-story adobe firehouse alongside the City Hall on the west side of Spring Street between Franklin (Court) and Temple Streets. Smith immediately started construction on August 19, 1871.

Vigorously lobbying councilmen and local newspapers, the volunteers won strong support from the ***Star,*** the city's major newspaper. (The ***Los Angeles Times*** did not start publication until 1881.) On September 27, 1871, an editorial that, perhaps more than anything else, catalyzed the city into initiating action leading to the purchase of the fire engine, said:

> *Certainly nothing is more evident than that measures should be taken to protect the property of the citizens from destruction by fire, and this can only be done by the general and combined action of the people themselves . . . the city should supply hose, carts, fire engine, (sic) and whatever may be necessary for the protection of property, and we also think the insurance companies should lend their aid to beat back the ravages of the devouring element. Large blocks of buildings are now in process of erection here; the means to counteract a fire are not in existence; hence the necessity for such an organization as is contemplated, that organization should be armed with any necessary defense weapons to fight the advance of the fiery monster. Look at Pioche, Virginia City, and San Francisco — large blocks of what were considered fireproof buildings went down before the fell destroyer, as if they were mere frame shells. Let us by all means have an efficient fire department, and a well-supplied armory to stay the progress of the flames should they become ignited.*

That editorial, had it been published only 11 days later, would also have cited Chicago whose hodge-podge of brick and wood buildings resembled Los Angeles', although on a much larger scale. For it was on that October 8, 1871, evening that the Great Chicago Fire started and burned for more than 30 hours, destroying one-third of the city, including 17,450 homes, hundreds of factories, stores and other buildings. The conflagration left an officially estimated 300 people dead. The Great Chicago Fire impacted Los Angeles in many ways. Chicago was still burning when the ***Star*** reported, October 9, 1871, that the council had voted the remaining funds needed for a fire engine, but only enough to buy a used, recently overhauled Amoskeag owned by the San Francisco Fire Department.

A public meeting was called in a county courtroom to raise funds for striken Chicago, but only three persons showed up. That was not surprising. A citizenry apathetic about fire in Los Angeles could not be expected to care about a conflagration thousands of miles away. Angelenos were rebuked by the ***Los Angeles Daily News*** which editorialized, "Chicago, our response to your appeal is, Starve! What do we care?" Los Angeles, shamed into second thoughts, quickly donated more than $2000 for the relief of Chicagoans.

LAFD PHOTO

Early fire hose was made of cowhide stitched with copper rivets.

The volunteers, meanwhile, were preparing to celebrate the imminent arrival of the Amoskeag and voted to send to San Francisco for uniforms similar in appearance to those of Anaheim firefighters: red shirts, black neck handkerchiefs, black pants, patent leather belts lettered "L.A. No. 1" and regulation fire hats. The steamer — repainted red with black and gold leaf trim as a condition of its purchase — was shipped from San Francisco to Wilmington and hauled into Los Angeles on October 30, 1871. With it came 500 feet of copper-riveted hose and a bell for the firehouse. Accompanying the Amoskeag was Engineer Walter C. Hinckley who would fire it up for acceptance tests by a council-appointed board of engineers. If the rig passed the tests, Hinckley would teach the volunteers how to operate it.

The steamer's arrival touched off much public excitement and a large crowd gathered around the Plaza by 9:30 a.m., November 1, 1871. Remi Nadeau, author of ***"The City Makers,"*** published in 1965 by Trans-Anglo Books, wrote that the volunteers "eagerly staged trial runs for the admiring crowd gathering on Main Street."

At last all was ready. The steamer's suction hose was connected to a hydrant opposite the Merced Theater on Main near Commercial Streets and 260 feet of hose was laid and a one-inch nozzle attached. Hinckley ignited the kindling and coal in the firebox and the steamer's gauge, rising to 80 pounds pressure, balked at going higher which would have provided a better stream. Hinckley nevertheless opened a valve and water surged through the hose. The horizontal stream measured a disappointing 150 feet. Aimed vertically, it barely cleared the 90-foot flagstaff of the Pico House.

After waiting, yearning and working so hard against incredible apathy and opposition, the volunteers were not only embarrassed but "painfully disappointed," says Nadeau. What was to be Los Angeles' first fire engine was a lemon and not at all up to Amoskeag's reputation for excellence. The rig was shipped back to the Manchester, New Hampshire, factory and another Amoskeag ordered. It, too, would be a long time in reaching Los Angeles.

The explanation was provided by Daniel D. Hayes, the San Francisco Fire Department's superintendent of fire engines, who was acting as an intermediary between the company and Los Angeles. In a letter to Councilman William Ferguson of the fire and water committee, Hayes said the delay was directly related to the Great Chicago Fire and its aftermath when cities throughout the country realized their peril was similar to Chicago's. "Since the Chicago fire, where a good many steamers were burned up, and now nearly all departments east have been increasing their forces . . . the company has been overrun with work," wrote Hayes, who said he had been assured by Amoskeag that "The Los Angeles engine is being pushed forward as rapidly as possible."

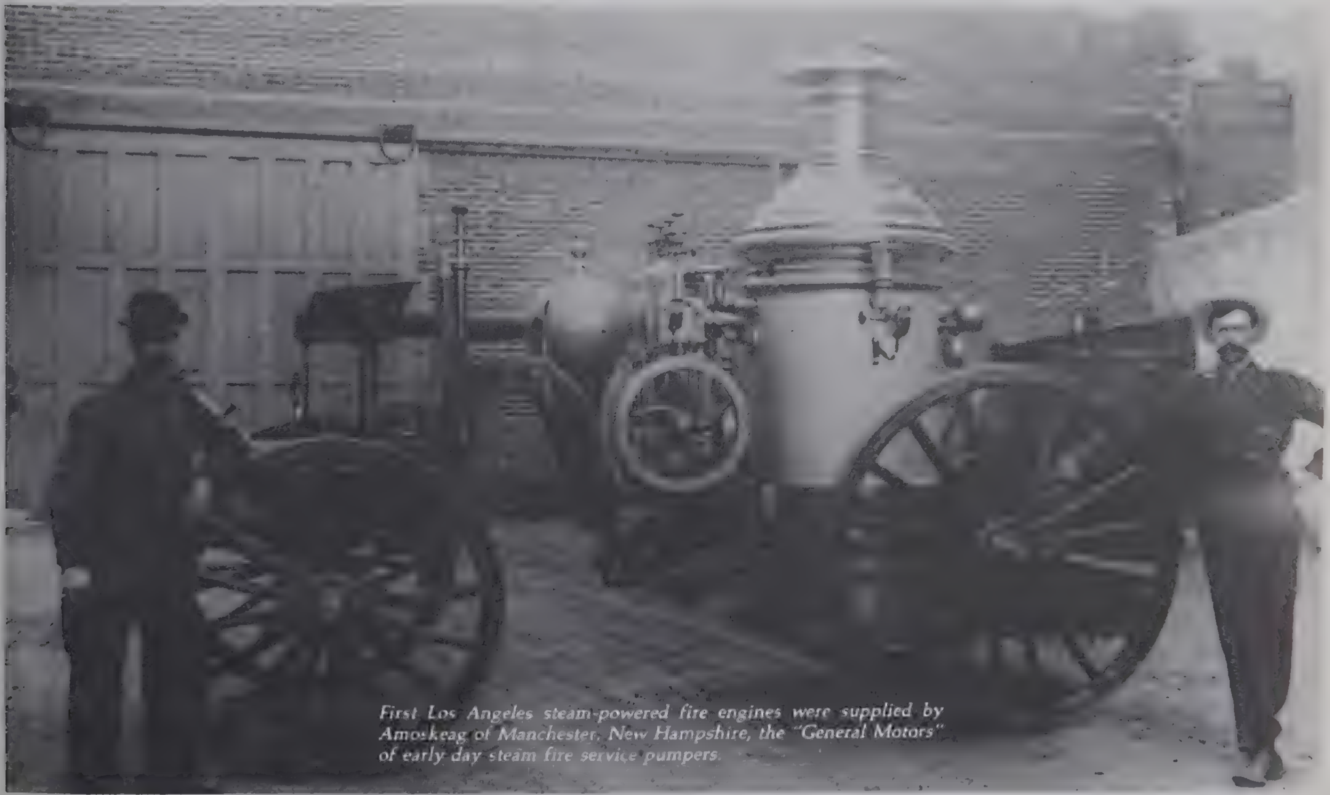
The Chicago conflagration was a major factor when the council, on December 8, 1871, passed an ordinance creating a fire department which could consist of not more than three steam fire engine companies, two hook and ladders and three hose companies. Each company was limited to no more than 65 males at least 21 years old. Official recognition of each company required an application to the council, together with a copy of the volunteer company's constitution signed by at least 25 proposed members, including the names of officers and the desired location of the station. Officers of each company were to include a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, foreman, and first and second assistant foreman. The official Los Angeles Volunteer Fire Department would not be created until 1876.

Nearly three years after their first meeting at Buffum's Saloon, the volunteers finally got their fire engine. And was it a beauty in its brilliant red paint, black trim, gold leaf and gleaming silver and brass fittings. The earlier debacle was not without its advantages. This was a new Amoskeag with all the company's latest modifications on its second size (750-gallon-per-minute) pumpers, including features the old hand-me-down San Francisco Fire Department engine did not have.

These features, according to contemporary accounts, included, "six-inch cylinders with seven-inch stroke and a maximum steam pressure of 110 pounds. The working pressure may be placed at 80 pounds, with which, with 100 feet of hose and a one-inch nozzle, two streams can be thrown to a height of 100 feet . . . The pumper is of a new patent . . . which unites simplicity of construction with powerful action, and which, in case of stoppage, can be put in order at almost a moment's notice. The suction hose is six inches in diameter, with proper strainers and an attachment which enables the machine to draw its water supply from the city's hydrants."

During acceptance trials, June 18, 1872, near the Plaza, and again watched by a huge crowd, the pumper's steam pressure gauge quickly registered 100 pounds and the rig shot not one but two solid streams "rocketing over the flagstaff of the Temple Block," says Nadeau. Sparks from the steamer's stack ignited a hardware store awning. "With a flourish of professional speed and efficiency, they (the volunteers) turned a nozzle towards the conflagration. The flames were overwhelmed with a flood of water. The . . . firemen stood proudly by their faithful machine glowing with satisfaction . . . Los Angeles finally had a real fire engine."

And thus began a tradition ranging over the next century which enabled Los Angeles firefighters to claim, with notably few exceptions, that they always had the latest and the best fire apparatus made in the United States. The council appointed George P. McLain an engineer, to tend the engine for $100 a month. He was the fire department's first paid employee.



LAFD PHOTO

First Los Angeles steam-powered fire engines were supplied by Amoskeag of Manchester, New Hampshire, the "General Motors" of early day steam fire service pumpers.

Still another tradition began three months later when the firefighters voted to celebrate their first imminent anniversary with a parade, picnic, games and other festivities. Promptly at 9:30, Monday morning, September 30, 1872, the parade began up Spring Street to where it then joined Main Street. A marching band preceded the floral-bedecked Amoskeag drawn by four gray horses provided by Butler's Livery Stable. The garlands of flowers and colorful ribbons decorating the engine were fashioned by the firefighters' wives and women friends. More prominent, however, was a dead eagle — killed a week earlier — which was mounted, its wings fully-outstretched, atop the boiler stack. Presumably, the eagle was the best patriotic symbol they could find.

Immediately behind the engine marched the volunteers in their freshly-cleaned and pressed uniforms. With long ropes they pulled the jumper hose rig, also festooned with flowers. All the firefighters wore helmets which, ironically, the city took a long time to get around to providing paid firefighters when the Los Angeles Fire Department went in service in 1886. As the firefighters passed the offices of the ***Los Angeles Star*** they gave three cheers for the newspaper which had for so long championed their efforts.

Winding their way through downtown streets, the volunteers stopped in the Downey Block at Main and Temple Streets where the city's most prominent photographer, V. Wolfenstein, captured the scene for posterity in what was to become one of the most famous photographs in the history of the department. We can only speculate why that location was chosen: Buffum's Saloon was in that block. The march then continued down Main Street and eventually ended at the Spring Street firehouse where the Amoskeag was backed inside, the horses returned to Butler's and the firefighters hurried to the Bella Union Hotel on Main near Commercial Streets where the proprietor was popping corks on free champagne for the firefighters.

The celebration continued that afternoon with a catered picnic — tickets at 50 cents apiece — in Sycamore Grove on the Arroyo Seco. Then the games began: sack races, climbing a greased pole, target shooting and the toughest game of all — catching a greased pig that was hard to hold. Prizes ranged from gold studs to sleeve buttons. There is no record that the slightest thought was given to mounting a standby crew at the firehouse in the event of a fire. Festivities ended with a baseball game pitting married firefighters against unmarried firefighters. The married men won, 8 to 3. The outcome prompted ***The Star*** to observe, "Celibacy received a setback and connubial bliss came out triumphant."

Exactly one month later the volunteers had more serious business to attend to when one of the worst fires in the city's history up to that time occurred around 1 a.m., October 10. A kerosine lamp exploded near a still in Packard's Los Angeles Distillery on lower Aliso Street at the Los Angeles River. Within minutes, flames engulfed the gigantic brick and wood structure which was only five-years-old, but already had become one of Los Angeles' major employers producing wines during the grape season and corn and rye whiskey the rest of the year. The fire occurred at the height of the grape harvest and the distillery was working round-the-clock while crushing more than 40 tons of grapes a day.

For some mysterious reason, the alarm was not turned in for at least half an hour until, as ***The Star*** reported, "the entire city was illuminated and the hands of the clock on the Courthouse were as visible as in daylight." Only then did pistol shots begin to ring out and somebody ran to the firehouse to ring the bell. The council had made no provision for the purchase of horses to pull the Amoskeag. Their idea was to rent horses from whichever livery stable owner got to the fire station first with them; a dubious and time-wasting arrangement at best, as the volunteers vainly attempted to point out. At that time of night, moreover, every stable in Los Angeles was closed.

The volunteers raced to the firehouse and pulled the heavy Amoskeag by ropes toward the rapidly-increasing glare far off to the northeast. The engine never got close to the fire. The rig bogged down in the sand on Aliso Street. Horses probably could have done the job, but the building was doomed before the alarm was sounded. At best, the firefighters could have brought only two streams to bear on the flames. This fire was going to need dozens by the time it finally ran out of buildings to burn.

Along with most of the city's 15,000 people who had rushed to the scene, the firefighters watched helplessly and with awe as the flames spread from the distillery to a federal whiskey inspection building next door and from there to a two-story malt house where more than 2000 sacks of rye and corn were stored. Flames turned from orange to white to purplish and orange again as they soared hundreds of feet. Constant explosions pocked the inferno as wine and whiskey barrels and vats let go. Flaming liquor gushed into the Los Angeles River and a long string of fire floated downstream.

The fire was as much a blow to the volunteers' pride as it was to the city's economy. Not only was the Los Angeles Distillery a major employer, but it was a vital source of income for area vineyard owners and grain farmers. Even worse was the announcement that the company carried not one dollar of fire insurance and would not rebuild. Farmers would have to dump their products on the marketplace at ruinous prices.

With the help of citizens, the volunteers managed to get their rig out of the sand. Fuming at the council's lack of foresight in buying horses and weary after tugging the Amoskeag to the fire, they somehow managed to overcome the extra exertions of hauling the engine back to the firehouse. They would not soon forget what they perceived as their total failure to get so much as one hoseline on the fire at the very first blaze they were called to fight.

The volunteers felt only somewhat better a few weeks later when an alarm at 3:30 p.m., November 17, called them to a fierce fire in a hay shed at the rear of Durfee's Stables on Aliso Street. Flames were threatening the stables, the Laventhal block of buildings and another block, mostly occupied by Chinese. The block of opium dens, houses of prostitution and gambling parlors was regarded as Los Angeles' equivalent to San Franciscos' infamous Barbary Coast.

Despite the severity of the fire and the exposures, the volunteers made short work of the problem. ***The Los Angeles Star,*** ever the champion of the volunteers, reported, "The steam fire engine and hose carriage, although hauled by hand, were soon upon the spot and working so vigorously, that in 30 minutes from their arrival the flames were subdued."

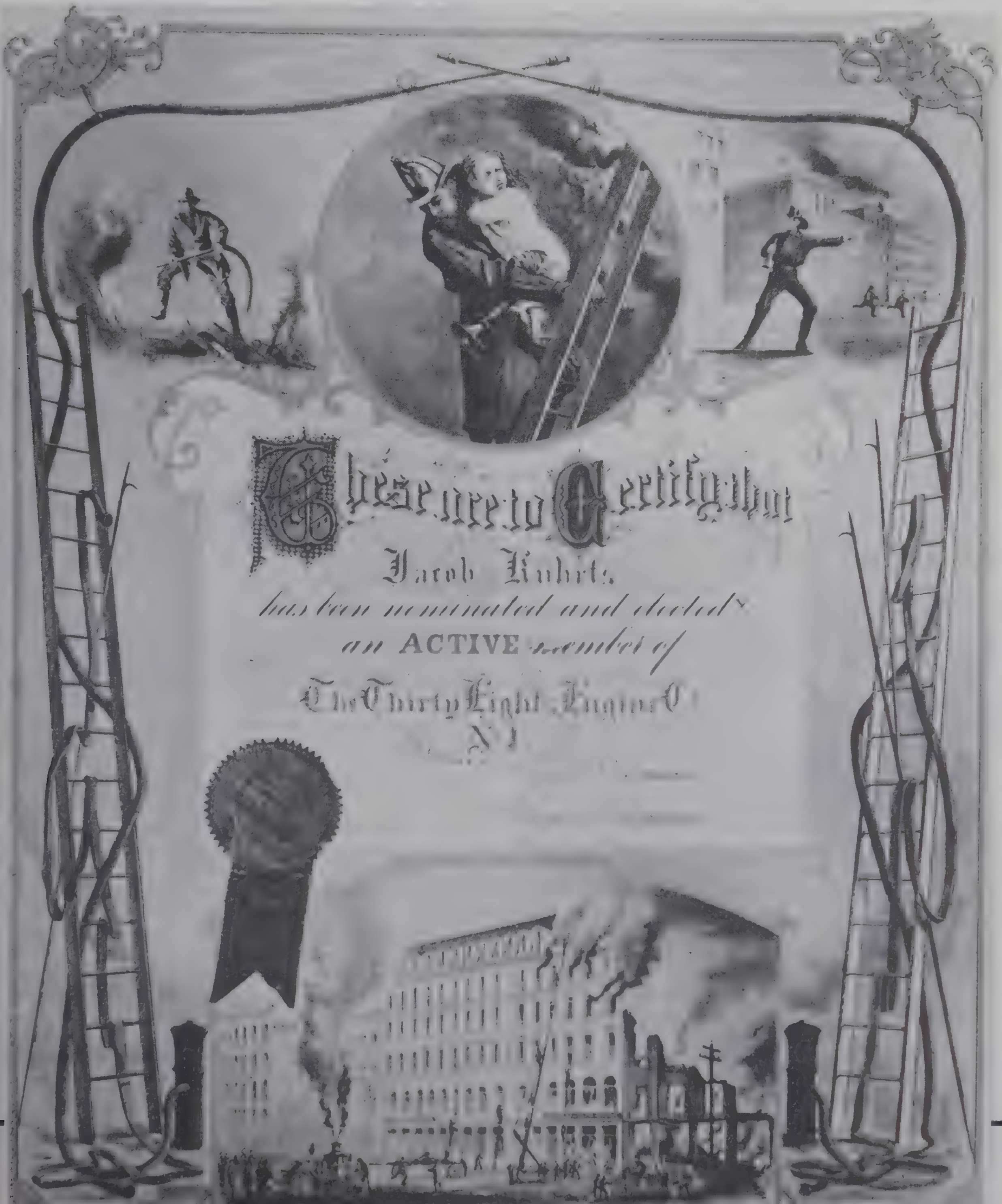
The volunteers continued their efforts to convince the council to buy them horses. Their points were many and made much sense: Relying on stable owners was risky and time-wasting. How could the councilmen expect the firefighters to be ready to do battle with a fire after exhausting themselves while pulling the engine and reel to the fire and, afterward, having enough strength remaining to lug the apparatus back to the firehouse? If not sand, as at the Los Angeles Distillery fire, then the Amoskeag would bog down in muddy, unpaved streets during the rainy season.

While the volunteers persisted, the councilmen just as persistently refused them horses while falling back on the usual excuse that there were no funds available. The fact, moreover, that the volunteers had done an outstanding job at the Durfee's fire showed the councilmen that the firefighters could indeed manage very well without horses. Tempers mounted until, early in 1874, the disgusted volunteers announced they were disbanding the company. Los Angeles was again without firefighters. But at least it had the best fire engine in the southwest and a hose reel, too, even if both rigs were beginning to gather dust and cobwebs in the closed firehouse.

Enter Billy Buffum's Saloon again, but with a new cast of characters who were, no doubt, as sympathetic to the frustrations of the members of the disbanded engine company as they were aware that Los Angeles badly needed to continue organized fire protection and, moreover, had to enlarge the size of the department as the distillery disaster and the city's phenomenal growth demonstrated.

Among the first to arrive at Buffum's that night of April 14, 1874, was none other than Tom Rowan of American Bakery fire fame and Ben C. Truman, founder and editor of *The Star.* Among the more than three dozen others who crowded into Buffum's were those whose names read like a who's-who of the younger members of the city's rapidly-growing business and political power establishment, including four former mayors. If there was a young "Old Boy's Club" in Los Angeles, these were among its elite and most of them were further closely associated through memberships in such lodges as the Free Masons, Odd Fellows and Knights of Pythias.

They included George Tiffany and John Paynter, founders and owners of the ***Los Angeles Express*** newspaper; Tom Temple of the Temple & Workman Bank, Joe Huber of the Farmers and Merchants Bank, Charles E. Miles, a civil engineer with the Los Angeles Water Company and two men, who with Miles, would become strongly remembered in the history of the Los Angeles fire service: Jacob "Uncle Jake" Kuhrts and Thomas Strohm. Both operated highly-successful groceries and were politically active.



These are to Certify that
Jacob Kuhrts
has been nominated and elected
an ACTIVE member of
The Thirty Eight Engine Co
No 1

FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE OLD PLAZA FIRE STATION

After debating several proposed names, they voted, 27-to-3, to call themselves Thirty-Eights Engine No. 1 because 38 was the number of those present who signified their intention of applying for volunteer firefighting credentials. Miles was elected foreman and Kuhrts treasurer of the company. The outfit would quickly become popularly-known as Original 38's which was, of course, a misnomer because they were not the city's first recognized volunteer firefighters. But they would become Los Angeles' first successful volunteer fire company.

The Buffum's meeting had to have been encouraged by the City Council because records indicate the volunteers were assured that the Amoskeag, the hose jumper and the firehouse would be turned over to them. The Original 38's consensus was, however, that the adobe fire station lacked certain amenities to which they were accustomed. It was no fit place to meet, so they voted to make Buffum's Saloon their headquarters. Two days later, the entire paraphernalia at the Spring Street station was, by official City Council action, turned over to the firefighters and it was "accepted by acclamation," according to minutes of that April 16, 1874, meeting.

It is not clear how, or even if, the horse problem was solved with formal city recognition of the Original 38's. There is evidence the council may have voted to purchase horses to avoid a repeat of the Engine 1 debacle, but other records indicate the system of borrowed or first-come, first-hired rentals from nearby stables continued at least until more fire companies were formed during the following years. At one time the council voted to house a pair of city-owned horses at the fire station at night after they had been used during the day by other city departments. That lasted briefly until a midnight alarm, January 8, 1873. One of the horses, exhausted during the day, dropped dead while pulling the engine to the fire. Not until February, 1875, did the council vote to buy two horses to pull the engine.

It is certain, however, that with the city rapidly building upward as well as outward, the volunteers sensed the urgent need for a hook and ladder rig to reach upper stories of buildings. One of the first actions of the Original 38's was to acquire a hook and ladder from Roeder & Lichtenberger, Los Angeles' best-known carriage makers. Louis Roeder and Louis Lichtenberger had never built a hook and ladder at their plant on Spring south of First Streets and perhaps had never seen one they could model.

In the rush to supply the volunteers' needs, Roeder & Lichtenberger can be forgiven for what they produced: a heavy and cumbersome rig. While we have no idea what the hook and ladder looked like, we know from histories of hook and ladder makers in other cities that they had never been able to do much better. Other fire departments often leveled similar criticisms of their first hook and ladders. Roeder & Lichtenberger's hook and ladder was quartered with the Amoskeag.

Putting the volunteers back in service came none too soon when two more of the city's largest industrial facilities were destroyed by fires. The first blaze, July 10, 1874, left standing only the brick walls of the Aliso Flouring Mills. Volunteer Firefighter-Newspaper Publisher Truman editorialized, "This disastrous conflagration proves beyond a doubt that Los Angeles city is by no means adequately protected against the devouring element. Another steamer is imperatively demanded, and it will be a penny wise and pound foolish policy indeed which shall prevent the City Council from ordering a first-class steamer to supplement the excellent one we now have. It performed splendidly . . . and the members of the company worked like heros, as did also the members of the hook and ladder company," said Truman, who was not at all modest about taking an attaboy for himself and his fellow volunteers.

Two months later an arsonist touched off the Eagle Flouring Mills on North Main Street at 2:30 a.m., Monday September 12. The fire had a good start before a police officer smelled smoke and saw the flames while he was walking his beat near Requena (Market) and Los Angeles Streets more than a block away. He immediately fired his pistol three times and the alarm was spread throughout the city.

Reports say Original 38's engine was "driven rapidly" to the fire which is strong evidence that horses, purchased or rented, were now always available to the volunteers. Flames were stabbing through the roof when they pulled up in front of the three-story brick corn and meal mill with its large wood-frame additions. When they started to lay hoselines they discovered there was no water in the nearby zanja. The volunteers were forced to drive a circuitous route through the nest of closely-built structures in the area until they found a water supply. This delay of at least 30 minutes until they got their first stream on the fire contributed to the total destruction of the flour mill and was one more stark reminder that the city needed more protection. Loss of the mill was a severe economic blow to farmers around Los Angeles who were in the midst of harvesting corn intended for the Eagle plant.

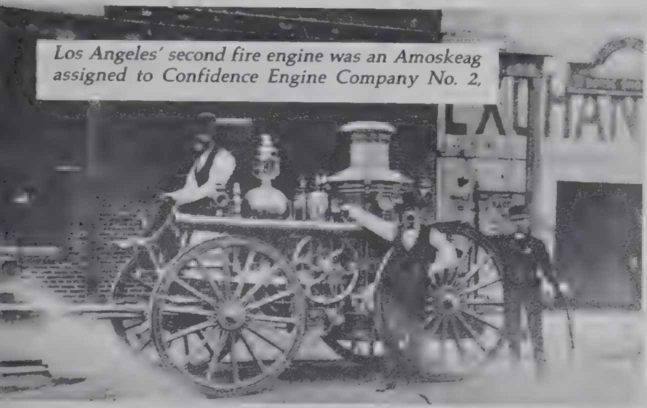
Another group of prominent businessmen and property owners took up the challenge to provide more fire protection and on May 27,1875, formed the city's second volunteer outfit which they named Confidence Engine Company No. 2. Among the 46 members was Walter S. Moore, who had just arrived in Los Angeles from his native Philadelphia, where he had been a volunteer firefighter. Moore was elected secretary and later was destined to head the Confidence Engine before going on to become the first chief engineer of the Los Angeles Fire Department when the paid department was created.

Dress uniform and parade formation of Confidence Engine Company No. 2. Walter S. Moore, who was to become the first chief engineer of the LAFD, is fourth from the right in the rear row.

The Confidence volunteers chose, as their firehouse, a two-story structure on Main Street immediately south of First Street, a building later to become famous as Child's Opera House. As with the Original 38's, the Confidence men sought a headquarters with the social ambience of Billy Buffum's and therefore selected the United States Hotel on Main Street on the southeast corner of Requena (Market) Street, approximately a block away from their firehouse. Confidence volunteers voted to build a 40-foot tower on top of the station and councilmen voted funds for an alarm bell.

Another Amoskeag was ordered, presumably with San Francisco's Hayes again acting on the city's behalf. There are several accounts of how Los Angeles got the rig so quickly. One of them says the Amoskeag was sent back to San Francisco by Japanese firefighters who could not maneuver it around narrow streets. Another claims that Hayes spotted the rig standing n a dock awaiting transportation to a Japanese city which was rying to raise money to pay for it. Hayes, so the story goes, imply shanghaied the Amoskeag and shipped it off to Los ngeles.

Whatever the case, the Amoskeag reached Los Angeles and uickly passed tests similar to those of 38's engine. Most ccounts say the new rig had nearly identical features and umping capacity of the first one, but the Amoskeag represen-ative who accompanied it to Los Angeles said the 6500-pound ngine could do 900 gallons per minute — 150 more than the irst engine. A distinguishing touch to the Confidence was a iny figure of an elephant topping its air dome.


Los Angeles' second fire engine was an Amoskeag assigned to Confidence Engine Company No. 2.

Confidence 2's arrival and acceptance was celebrated on the ight of June 26, 1875, with a torchlight parade through the ity streets. Led by the Original 38's and with Confidence 2 in he center of the line of march, some 60 torch-bearing volun-eers paused only at ***The Star*** to give three cheers. Rockets, ombs and other fireworks lit the sky, but fortunately caused o fires. After backing their steamers into the firehouses, the irefighters from both companies went to the Hotel des 'rinces, "where they partook of a sumptuous collation with he usual accompaniments of speech and wine and toasts," said *he Star's* Truman. "We hope that the kindly spirit which was hown . . . to exist between them (the two fire companies) may ver continue, and that the only rivalry between them may onsist in a struggle as to which shall most effectually combat he flames which they are organized and armed to subdue."

Within a month, the two fire companies got their first hance to demonstrate how well they would work together vhen, at 10:30 p.m., July 15, an enormous glare in the sky, istol shots and bells announced a major fire on Spring Street t Louis Roeder's Overland Corral, a sprawling complex of vooden stables, many horses, harnesses, carriages, stage oaches and hay and grain sheds. The Original 38's and Confi-ence 2 arrived almost simultaneously and quickly surrounded he fire with attacks from Spring Street on the east and Fort treet (Broadway) on the west. Most of the horses, all of the tages and harnesses and a large quantity of grain, were saved y the combined efforts of the two volunteer companies.

Two fire companies, five pieces of apparatus and perhaps round 130 volunteers coupled with the city's rapid expansion, nade it obvious more companies soon would be formed. The ouncil therefore, enlarged upon its 1871 ordinance authoriz-ng a volunteer fire department. Lines of authority needed to be stablished and rules and regulations further formalized.

On June 20, 1876, the Los Angeles Volunteer Fire Depart-nent became effective after a board of delegates from the two ompanies selected a slate of candidates for office. Miles, fore-nan of Original 38's was elected by the volunteers as the first hief engineer of the VFD. George E. Gard, foreman of Confi-ence 2 was named assistant chief. (Four years later Gard became chief of police.)

Rules and regulations largely followed those of disbanded Engine Company No. 1 which, in turn, were virtually identical to those volunteer fire departments in eastern cities. A digest of the rules as later adopted by the volunteers included the following:

- Failure to respond to an alarm of fire: $1.00 fine.
- Failure to answer roll call after a fire occurring between 7 p.m., and 6 a.m.: $1.00 fine.
- Absence at roll call upon return from a false alarm: 25 cents fine.
- Disobeying an officer's orders: $5.00 fine.
- Non-attendance at meetings: 50 cents fine.
- Introducing any religious or political subject or using profane language in the meetings of the company or making known to any person not a member, any remarks or divulging any business of the meeting: $3.00 fine or expulsion.
- Smoking cigars or pipes during meetings or intoxication: $2.50 fine or expulsion.

A postscript to these rules is the case of Victor Ponet, a member of the Original 38's. Ponet wanted to be a volunteer and be included in all the traditional comradeship that went with election into membership, but he did not want to be a volunteer badly enough to fight fires. His fines, like others assessed against the volunteers, went into a fund which Kuhrts said was used to "assist in the very frequent 'blow-outs' of the brave fire laddies. I think we must have had hundreds of dollars saved up from Ponet's fines."

As volunteers, the members enjoyed certain privileges. They were exempt from jury duty, militia service and did not have to pay poll voting taxes. There was, however, one especially distasteful requirement: The zanjero, sheriff or police chief could, and often did, order volunteers to perform police duties; notably removal of dead bodies and animal corpses from zanjas and streets.

Chief Engineer Miles' two earliest priorities were to lobby the City Council for a better fire alarm system and to obtain a more suitable hook and ladder. He failed in the first and came close in the second. The city bought what contemporary accounts refer to as a village hook and ladder or simply a Babcock. Both terms are appropriate, but require amplification.

LAFD PHOTO

The first chief engineer of the Los Angeles Volunteer Fire Department: Charles E. Miles.

As a fallout from the Great Chicago Fire, apparatus makers began adapting an 1864 French idea for extinguishing fires with a mixture of bicarbonate of soda, sulfuric acid and water. The intent was to make water do a better job as an extinguishing agent. Mixed together, the chemicals and water created carbon dioxide, a pressurized gas. The pressure forced the water through hoselines.

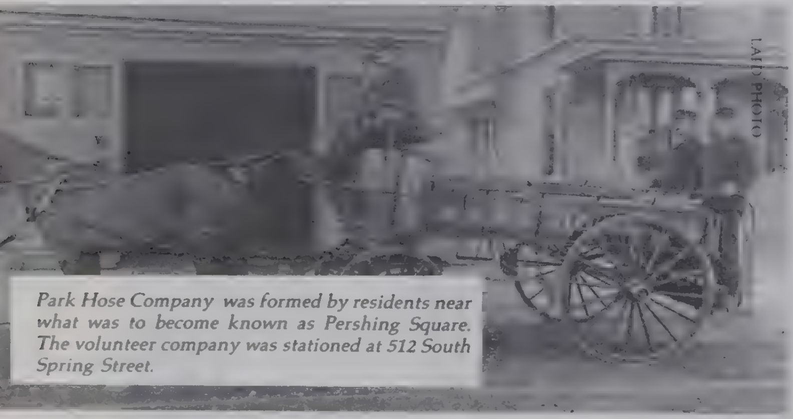
The Babcock Manufacturing Company of Chicago was among the three largest makers of this equipment, at first offered as hand-held extinguishers. By 1875 this system was being incorporated into large-wheeled rigs, commonly known as chemical engines or combination chemical and hose engines. In that same year, Babcock advertised that its carbon dioxide firefighting equipment was 30 times more effective than water. An engine with 200 gallons of water and chemicals on board could do the work of 6000 gallons of extinguishing agent, the company claimed. Other authorities said the extinguishing value was equal to that of water. Fire historians estimate that during the chemical engine era, about 80 per cent of the nation's fires were put out by these rigs. Chemical engines were to become ideal in Los Angeles with its severe water supply problems.

Miles apparently ordered a small hook and ladder apparatus with six hand-held extinguishers which Babcock probably built for use in villages; an appropriate choice for Los Angeles, a community of 6000 people at that time. Hence the term village hook and ladder. Because no practical aerial ladder had yet been devised — the evolution of ladder companies lagged far behind that of fire engine technology — the Babcock Village Hook and Ladder rig probably had side and rack-mounted ladders; none of them longer than around 35 feet and all of them raised by muscle power.

While awaiting delivery of the rig via San Francisco, Miles and his fellow members of 38's reportedly were "in high glee . . . and the boys say that when they get their new rig and the new extinguishers they will knock the spots out of any fire that can be started here quicker than a wink and what they say they mean."

If we know little more about the Babcock, we know less about the other volunteer companies that were quickly formed. During the following century considerable confusion was created by discrepancies in various departmental histories. Many accounts claim that four companies, not two, formed the original Volunteer Fire Department of 1876. We must, therefore, defer to the handwritten 1879 annual report by Miles who says otherwise.

Miles' report notes that the third volunteer outfit, Park Hose Company, was chartered on July 23, 1878, two years after the official formation of the VFD. Park Hose was formed by residents in the area around what was to become known as Pershing Square, but which was, at that time, strictly suburbia. The four-wheel hose-carrying wagon stationed at 512 South Spring Street was given to Park Hose by Confidence 2 volunteers.



LAFD PHOTO

Park Hose Company was formed by residents near what was to become known as Pershing Square. The volunteer company was stationed at 512 South Spring Street.

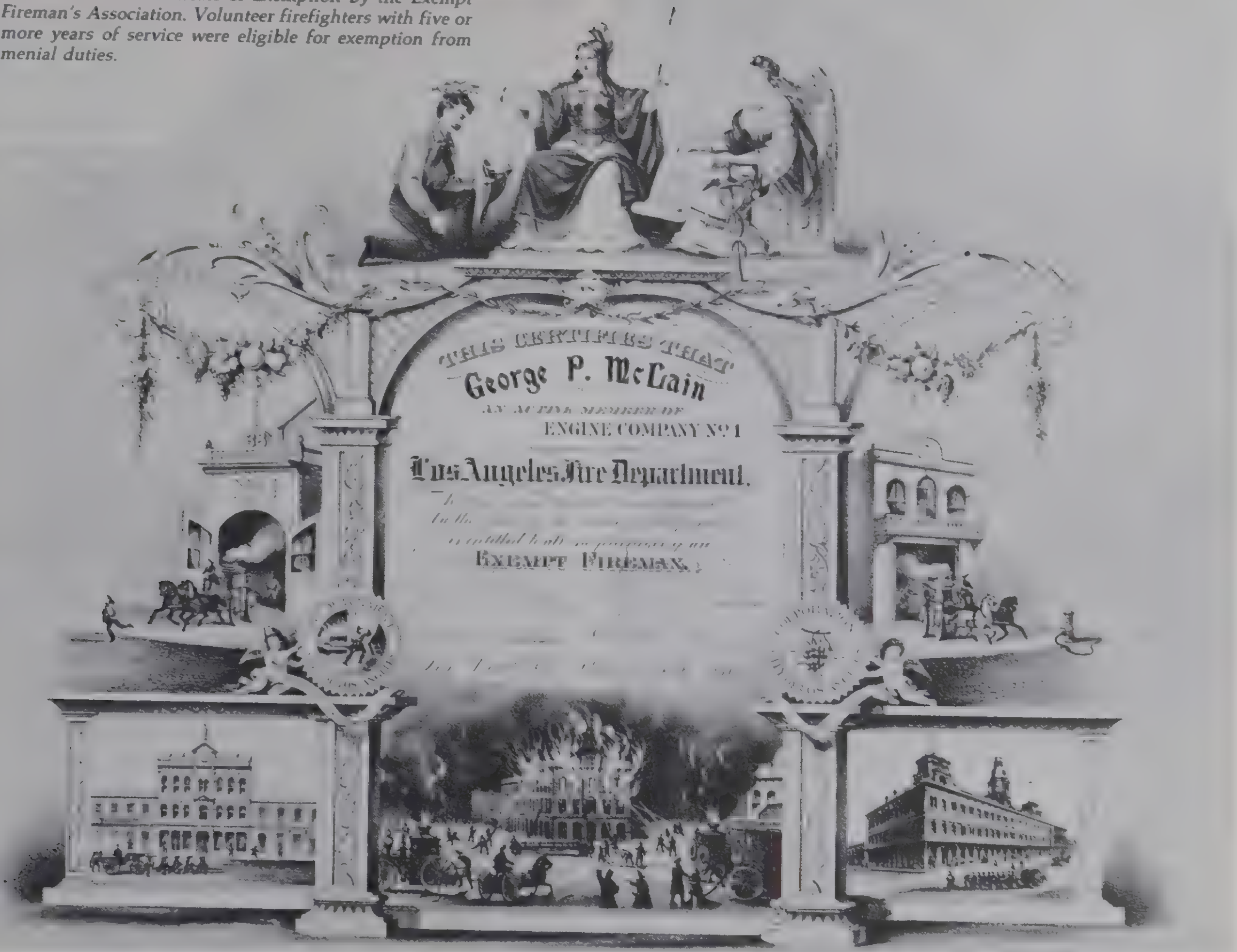
Exactly one year to the day later, the fourth company was formed: Vigilance Hook and Ladder Company No. 1. Original 38's gave them their Babcock Village Hook and Ladder which was quartered on Aliso near Los Angeles Streets. Evidence strongly suggests that Los Angeles' first independently-housed hook and ladder originally was named Los Vigilantes because its members were mostly Spanish, French, and Italian-speaking Angelenos. The clumsy ladder outfit built by Roeder & Lichtenberger was sold to Wilmington. It is to be hoped that both the City Council and the volunteers felt at least a tinge of conscience when they pawned that monster off to the harbor city.

Miles was re-elected chief engineer annually until 1880 while serving as county recorder, a post that eventually led to his undoing. A friend recalled, "Unfortunately for Charlie, he entered politics, a role in which he was surprisingly popular. He had every qualification for politics but one: he could not for the life of him say no." Miles, custodian of county funds, loaned money to fellow Democrats. Often as not, they could not or would not pay him back. Miles' brother, a San Francisco broker, loaned him the money to repay the county. By then the damage to his otherwise unsullied firefighting reputation and popularity among the volunteers could not be mended. He did not stand for reelection and "Uncle Jake" Kuhrts succeeded him in March, 1880, as the volunteers' second chief engineer.

Born in Germany in 1832, Kuhrts was a colorful storyteller. He liked to recall that he went to sea while he was a boy, landed in California by way of China, set off for the gold fields and came away luckless. He drove a mule team over unmarked trails to Los Angeles by way of the Tehachapis and arrived in 1858 to open a grocery store. Kuhrts soon married, prospered and plowed his profits into land speculations that made him wealthy. Active in city government, his elected and appointed posts included those of councilman and superintendent of streets. He would one day become one of the city's first fire commissioners. Kuhrts served three terms as chief engineer: twice as a volunteer and once as interim chief of the paid LAFD.

Jacob "Uncle Jake" Kuhrts, one of Los Angeles' most influential leaders, served briefly as chief engineer of both the Los Angeles Volunteer Fire Department and Los Angeles Fire Department. As a fire commissioner and city councilman, his lifelong interest in fire protection profoundly impacted the course of the LAFD.

George P. McLain, Los Angeles' first paid firefighter, received the first Certificate of Exemption by the Exempt Fireman's Association. Volunteer firefighters with five or more years of service were eligible for exemption from menial duties.



THIS CERTIFIES THAT
George P. McLain
AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF
ENGINE COMPANY Nº 1
Los Angeles Fire Department,
EXEMPT FIREMAN.

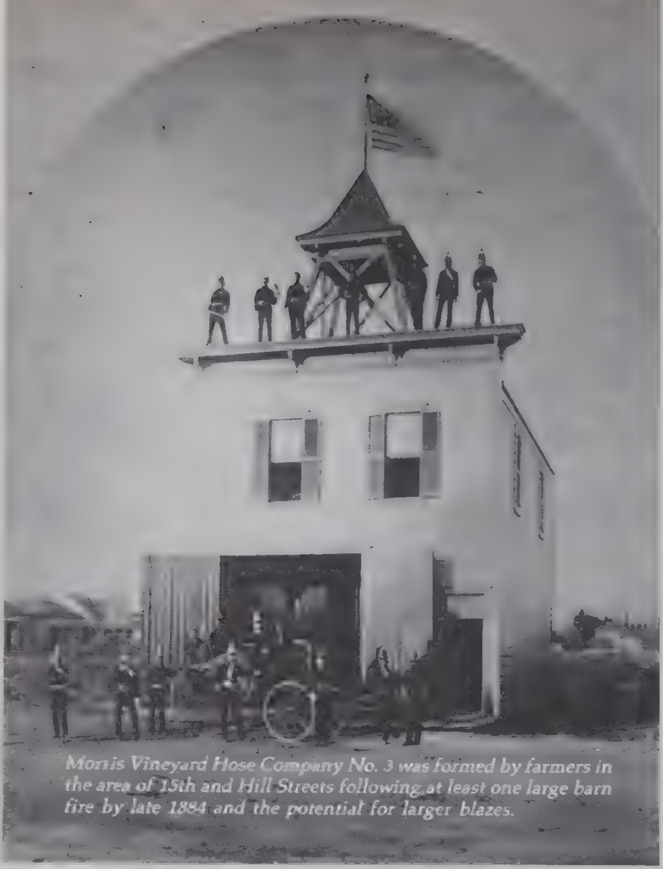
In 1881, during his first year as chief engineer, Kuhrts was elected president of the newly-formed Exempt Fireman's Association. Moore was chosen vice president and McLain, treasurer. Acting on a petition by the volunteers, California's governor had, in 1876, officially exempted all volunteers with five or more years of service from the detested chore of removing dead bodies, animals and other police duties. The first Certificate of Exemption, dated September 30, 1876, went to McLain, the department's first paid employee. The Association became an elite organization and held annual banquets. Eventually it took charge of the Inglewood Cemetery plot where deceased members of the department were laid to rest. The Exempts also aised a fund for the use of destitute volunteers.

Also during his first term, Kurhts led the drive to acquire one of the world's first practical hook and ladders. For more han a century, firefighters throughout the world had been ooking for a practical aerial ladder of greater length and trength than those raised by hand. Many apparatus makers had tried to build a reliable aerial truck, but their efforts often ended disastrously as the ladders broke and sent firefighters plummeting to their deaths or crippling injuries. Considering hat eastern cities, notably New York, badly needed aerials and ost many victims trapped in upper stories for want of longer adders, it is ironic that it fell to San Francisco's Hayes to inally develop one.

Hayes was not only the San Francisco Fire Department's oremost authority on pumpers, but he ingeniously developed 5 and 85-foot aerial ladders that were raised by from four to ix firefighters hand-cranking a horizontal worm gear. As the gear turned, a large nut was forced forward, thus raising the ladder. Another Hayes innovation was a turntable mounting which enabled the ladder to be swung into almost any position. The first of his patented Hayes Hook & Ladder Truck and Fire Escape Combined rigs was acquired for $3000 by the San Francisco Fire Department. Hayes subsequently built about five aerials for western cities, including a 65-footer for Los Angeles' Vigilance volunteers, before selling his patents to the LaFrance Engine Company which later became American LaFrance.

Other volunteer fire companies were quickly formed. In 1882, Southern Pacific Railroad employees formed a hose company stationed near the passenger depot.They never officially joined the department, but worked with the volunteers at fires on or near the railroad's property. East Los Angeles Hose Company No. 2 was formed, March 4, 1884, and quartered on Truman Street near Downey Drive (about where North Main and Broadway now turn east after crossing the Los Angeles River).

The major impetus for the organization of East Los Angeles Hose was a large fire a few months earlier when, at 3 p.m., November 6, Confidence volunteers were called to a fire near Downey Drive. It was a long run for the volunteers and they found a large barn containing 50 tons of hay and two horses was well-involved. Even if there were hydrants or any other water supply, which there were not, the building was lost. Shortly thereafter that year, grapegrowers in the vicinity of 15th and Hill Streets realized they were in similar peril and formed Morris Vineyard Hose Company No. 3.



Morris Vineyard Hose Company No. 3 was formed by farmers in the area of 15th and Hill Streets following at least one large barn fire by late 1884 and the potential for larger blazes.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF BILL DAHLQUIST

In April, 1883, Moore succeeded Kuhrts as chief engineer and, as had his predecessors, campaigned for a better fire alarm system to supplement the city's telephone service which began the preceding year. Three months later, the ***Los Angeles Times*** of July 8, carried a description of the new fire alarm box system. At 10:45 the night before, John Brown, a passerby, noticed a fire in Remi Nadeau's four-story brick hotel, the city's first four-story building and the most elegant hostelry in the city. Brown ran into the hotel's office, said the article, grabbed a fire alarm key, ran outside, opened a firebox and turned the handle.

"All the city was instantly notified there was a fire," reported the ***Times.*** "The bell in the central (City Hall) tower, moved by the electric fluid started at the district box, gave notice to the whole city by the number of strokes given, in just what locality the fire was. At the different fire stations things worked like a charm. Simultaneously with the stroke of the central tower bell, the large gongs in the stations struck off the same instructions as to the locality of the fire . . . In just three minutes from the time John Brown turned in the alarm, five streams were playing on the fire. Thanks to the perfect fire system adopted by our wise City Fathers, one of the finest blocks in the city was saved from destruction."

The first practical fire alarm box system was devised in 1839 by Dr. William F. Channing, a Harvard medical school graduate. The system was first used in Boston and Canning later sold his patents to the Gamewell Company. Los Angeles' first system was a Richmond, but was ultimately replaced by a Gamewell. Pulling or turning a lever on the outside of the box caused clock-like springs inside to release a notched metal wheel. As this character wheel turned, the notches corresponding to the number of that box, transmitted electrical impulses which opened and closed circuits. The alarm caused the tower bell to begin tolling the box number.

In a similar, simultaneous manner, the impulses activated firehouse gongs. The box number also was registered on a thin strip of paper leading from a spool. With each clang of the gong, the number was indicated by tiny, triangular-shaped punchouts on the alarm register's paper strip. A list of those fireboxes to which the company responded on the first alar was mounted near the watch desk. Later, firehouses wer equipped with two clocks over the desk. The first strike of a alarm automatically stopped one of the clocks so the officer i charge of the company could later accurately record the time the alarm in this station journal book. Locations of boxe which called the company to second, third or fourth alarm were shown on cards numerically filed in a watch desk drawe

It is perhaps difficult to reconcile that ***Times*** article wit Moore's recommendation, only a month later, that the cit needed a better fire alarm system. Boxes were far apart. That why they were called district boxes. Probably they were larg ly located close to major buildings in the downtown distric There were none at all in residential areas. Evidence furth indicates many citizens were leery of the contraptions an preferred to rely upon the traditional pistol shots to soun alarms. And any firebox system that requires somebody t obtain a key before turning in an alarm is a time-wastin system. Or no system at all if the key cannot be found.

Several months later, Los Angeles firefighters got a porter of disasters to come when, on September 22, after days of hig temperatures, low humidity and fierce Santa Ana winds, a enormous cloud of smoke was seen coming from Coldwat Canyon, nine miles west of the city limits. It was described the worst and most disastrous brush fire to occur that close the city up to that time. Slopping over thousands of acres an down into the flatlands, the flames destroyed cottages, ranche farmhouses, barns, haystacks, out-buildings and 120 stands bees as well as the honey house at N. Leyering's famous hone farm.

The fire burned for at least three days. On September 25, sti another enormous brush fire was seen in the San Fernand Valley mountain area far to the north. That night a long line flames etching the foothills could be seen throughout L Angeles. The firefighters undoubtedly wondered whatev would they do if ever called upon to put out fires that large an sprawling over dozens of miles of rugged terrain.

Los Angeles' original adobe firehouse, hastily built ne door to the old Spring Street City Hall, was now 13-years-ol and structurally unsound. The roof leaked, rotten wood floo ing threatened to collapse under the weight of the three-and- half-ton Amoskeag and, as the ***Los Angeles Times*** aptly put

n November 6, 1883, the fire station was "not really a suitable lace for a first class cow stable."

Given the City Council's tradition of forcing the firefighters make-do with what they had, it would seem unlikely that hey could anticipate a new station. But times had changed. he firefighters now had clout in the council. Chief Engineer Moore was serving as City Council president and chairman of he fire and water committee. He had the support of Kuhrts nd other powerful business and political leaders associated vith the Original 38's.

Slight wonder, therefore, that matters moved along as fast as hey did. The council voted for a new station, funds to build it nd advertised for bids to design and construct it. Several ocations were studied and the final choice was 26 Plaza Street n the Old Plaza; a site the city thought it owned — but did not. Dispute over ownership of the site and the station was to drag hrough the courts for a long time until a compromise settlenent was reached.)

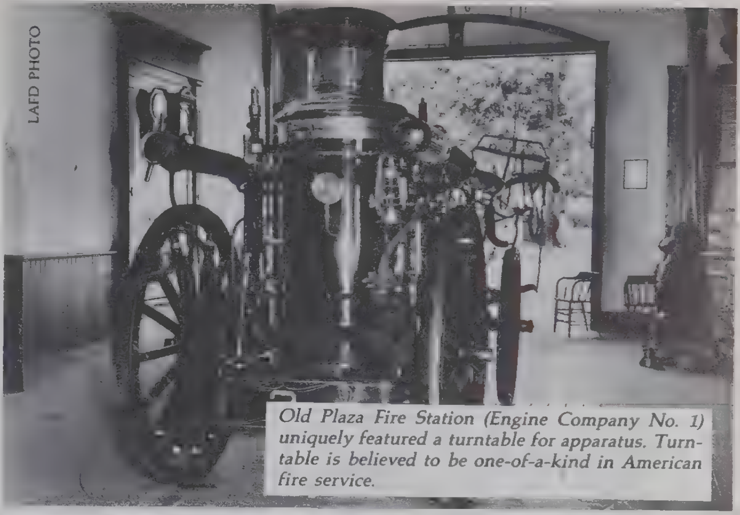
William A. Boring, a recent arrival from Carlinville, Illinois, vas chosen as architect. Boring's design contrasted sharply vith the early Spanish motif throughout the Old Plaza area. He lanned a rectangular, two-story red brick building which ooked more like a fire station transplanted from the midwest, ncluding the traditional double doors and cupola for the bell.

It was not a prepossessing structure, but it had a unique eature: a turntable towards the rear of the station. The device vas a most welcome and useful innovation. Instead of jockeyng the Amoskeag, with the help of the horses, back into the tation after alarms, the firefighters merely headed into the tation and, when the engine was over the turntable, easily ushed it around to face the front doors until the next alarm. ire historians have never found another firehouse with a urntable. That, by itself, is incredible, considering the idea vas so obvious. The turntable should have made Boring well-emembered by firefighters, but he is better-known as the rchitect for the first ***Los Angeles Times*** Building, early buildngs on the University of Southern California campus and, nost of all, the Immigration Station on New York's Ellis sland.

Dennis Hennessy submitted the low construction bid and vas awarded the contract on April 22, 1884. Total cost of the uilding, with amenities requested by the volunteers and approved by the council, was $4665. The Plaza Firehouse was finished by mid-August and, on September 16, 1884, Original 38's moved in.

Babcock Hook and Ladder carried not only ladders, but fire extinguishing chemicals.

LAFD PHOTO



LAFD PHOTO

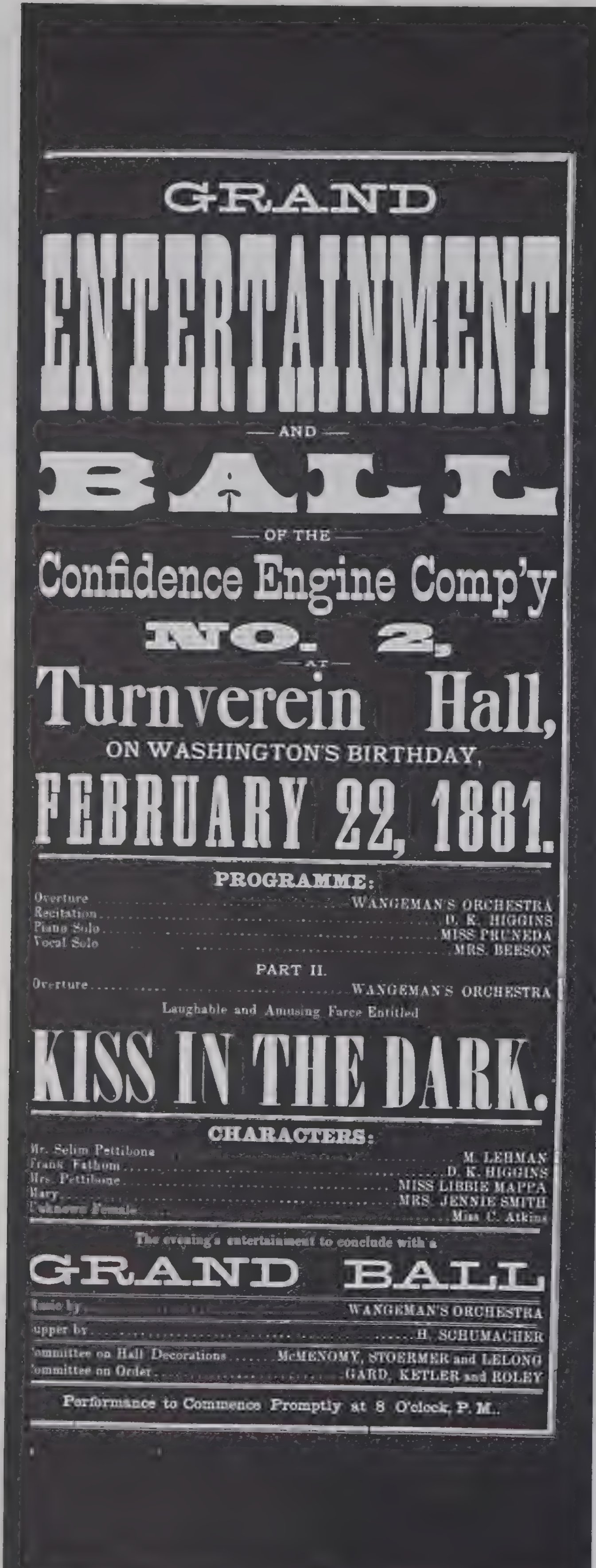
Old Plaza Fire Station (Engine Company No. 1) uniquely featured a turntable for apparatus. Turntable is believed to be one-of-a-kind in American fire service.

Less than a month after the house went in service, the Original 38's turned out of their new fire station to fight their first major fire since they moved in. At 6:10 p.m., October 24, 1884, the city's volunteers were called to the two-story frame home of Charles Rohr at 118 Laxard Street, (Ducommun Street) after an exploding kerosine lamp spread fire from the first to the second floor. It was a long run for the volunteers and flames were erupting from the roof when they arrived 15 minutes after the alarm. The poor water supply in the area quickly ran out and the voluteers' only hope was to protect the exposed houses, which they successfully did. Prophetically, the ***Los Angeles Times*** account of the incident said, "The fire . . . more than ever, demonstrated . . . the necessity of a paid fire department."

The volunteers were understandably resentful. They wondered how paid firefighters could have done any better with a delayed alarm, which even the ***Times*** acknowledged, the city's poor water supply and other problems which existed long before the Volunteer Fire Department was formed. Repeatedly, moreover, they had sought improvements and just as repeatedly they had been ignored. They certainly did not quarrel with the fact that the city was growing rapidly, its structures were being jammed closer together and built taller to get the utmost usage out of costly land in those days of real estate speculation.

Flammable materials inside what the uninformed community considered "fireproof buildings" further created all the ingredients for major fires which required more men and more apparatus to fight them. Pleaded the volunteers: improve the alarm system, somehow provide more water, more hydrants, encourage the formation of more companies and buy more apparatus. With that, the volunteers would be fully capable of providing effective fire protection.

Despite their entreaties, the volunteers sensed the twilight of the volunteer era when, on January 7, 1885, Mayor Edward F. Spense proposed the formation of a paid department. Three months later the volunteers chose Frank Day, a city councilman and formerly of Confidence 2, to succeed Moore. Day was the fourth and final chief engineer of the Volunteer Fire Department. That year was not going to be a pleasant one for Day or the volunteers who felt that he sided with Moore. Kuhrts and many of their fellow firefighters agreed with proponents of a paid fire department. From that feeling of betrayal by Day and others sprouted the seeds of dissension among the volunteers which would soon escalate into a situation which hastened the creation of a paid department.



GRAND
ENTERTAINMENT
— AND —
BALL
— OF THE —
Confidence Engine Comp'y
NO. 2,
— AT —
Turnverein Hall,
ON WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY,
FEBRUARY 22, 1881.

PROGRAMME:

Overture........................WANGEMAN'S ORCHESTRA
Recitation........................D. K. HIGGINS
Piano Solo........................MISS PRUNEDA
Vocal Solo........................MRS. BEESON

PART II.

Overture........................WANGEMAN'S ORCHESTRA

Laughable and Amusing Farce Entitled

KISS IN THE DARK.

CHARACTERS:

Mr. Selim Pettibone........................M. LEHMAN
Frank Fathom........................D. K. HIGGINS
Mrs. Pettibone........................MISS LIBBIE MAPPA
Mary........................MRS. JENNIE SMITH
Unknown Female........................Miss C. Atkins

The evening's entertainment to conclude with a

GRAND BALL

usic by........................WANGEMAN'S ORCHESTRA
upper by........................H. SCHUMACHER
ommittee on Hall Decorations......McMENOMY, STOERMER and LELONG
ommittee on Order........................GARD, KETLER and ROLEY

Performance to Commence Promptly at 8 O'clock, P. M.

There were, to be sure, fires still to be fought by the volunteers. While waiting to learn their almost certain fate, little els remained for them except reminiscenses to be recalled and yearning for the past which would never return. An anonymous volunteer, possibly Kuhrts — looked back upon thos years while speaking with a ***Los Angeles Times*** writer who, o July 14, 1914, reported what he said:

"It wasn't all work, by any means. We had our times for pla and it was play with a capital P. There were our annual picnic in the spring at Sycamore Grove, Arroyo Seco or City Gardens now Eighth and San Pedro Streets. We had dancing, priz waltzing, sports of all kinds and good things to eat. The girl were always kind to us and I think gave us a little preferenc over the fellows who were not wearing a fireman's uniform We certainly were rather proud of that uniform ourselves an nothing could induce us to take off those great heavy hat (helmets) short of the necessity of courtesy. We even dance with them pressing down on our perspiring heads.

"There was also an annual entertainment and ball in th winter months, usually at the old Turnverein Hall, a big fram building on Spring Street between Second and Third Street . . . We were always on hand when there was a wedding. Th department, in full uniform, and with a brass band, invariabl serenaded its newly-married members. It was made a big hilarious event. The firehouse bells jingled joyously. We als turned out, uniformed, for the funerals and draped our fire houses and apparatus. We marched with our band to the . . burial grounds . . . our house bells tolling mournfully.

"Our fire department was patriotic and public-spirited in th extreme. In full regalia, we were on hand to welcome all distinguished visitors, night or day, fulfilling the duties which usually fall to the chamber of commerce. On the Fourth of July the entire department, fully-decorated, newly-painted and burnished, newly-uniformed, turned out in full ranks proudl marching behind the band through the principal streets, hauling their hose carts or float, upon which was enthroned one o the city's finest daughters in royal robes, surrounded by he suite, gorgeous and resplendent. The rivalry between the companies was keen and they lavishly spent their money to wi the approval of the applauding public. It was a greater hono for a young girl in those days to be chosen Goddess of Liberty to ride on the hose wagon, than to be Queen of the Fiesta today Those goddesses of the good old times are now the gran dames of our social world."

Popular belief holds that the main explanation for the demise of volunteer fire departments in cities across the United States, including Los Angeles, was rowdyism, drunkenness and fighting. It has become idiomatic among those not familiar with the history of firefighting in America that volunteers liked to fight among themselves more than they liked to fight fires. Lore further claims that losses were, as a result, high as buildings fell in ruins. Perhaps the myths pertaining to unruly Los Angeles volunteer firefighters were largely kindled by none other than that master storyteller, Uncle Jake Kuhrts, who, some 38 years later, told the ***Los Angeles Times:***

"Competition between the . . . companies was tart and peppery. They were constantly trying to beat each other to the scene of the action. When the Chinese church took fire on Wilmington Street, No. 1 had arrived and had the fire out when No. 2 came gonging grandly up the street. Naturally we had a ha-ha on No. 2. But the No. 2's resolved to get even. They set Captain Thom's (a member of Original 38's) chicken coop afire and being wise, of course, they beat us to it.

"We had many fights. I never got badly hurt in any of them. Of course I have had my teeth loosened, eyes blackened and fingers broken, but nothing serious. The boys used to start a blaze now and then for fun, or to get the best of the other fire ompanies. Then it immediately ended in a fight. Oh, those vere glorious times!"

Except for minor incidents, few and far between, there is bsolutely no evidence to support the notion that Los Angeles olunteers were a gang of hooligans. Here we must digress rom Los Angeles firefighting in particular to American volun-eer firefighting in general to put matters in perspective while roviding explanations why Los Angeles did not experience he scandalous conduct of the volunteers as did some cities east f Cincinnati during the years before paid fire departments ecame economically feasible.

It is an oversimplification, but historically verifiable, to note hat early volunteer firefighting history in the United States, tarting with colonial times, passed through two phases. Los ngeles experienced the first in almost full measure and the econd only partially. In the first phase, America's volunteers vere, like their later Los Angeles counterparts, mainly commu-ity leaders. Benjamin Franklin formed Philadelphia's first olunteer fire company, Union Fire Company, on December 7, 736. It became so successful that 12 more companies were uickly formed. "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of ure," was coined by Franklin in reference to his pioneering ire prevention efforts. Later, he helped to form America's first uccessful fire insurance company, the Philadelphia Contribu-ionship for the Insurance of Houses from Loss by Fire. The ompany is still in business.

George Washington was a volunteer member of Friendship ire Company, founded in Alexandria, Virginia, August 13, 774, near his Mount Vernon estate. Washington purchased a and-operated fire engine and presented it to his fellow fire-ighters. Paul Revere might never have been able to have made is famous ride without being arrested by the British, except or the fact that, as a volunteer firefighter, he had an official ass permitting him to be on the streets at night. James Bu-hanan was a member of the Lancaster, Pennsylvania Union Company and Millard Fillmore fought fire with Buffalo's Ea-le Hose long before they became presidents of the United tates.

Phase two spanned the years from 1830 to the 1862 start of he War Between the States. As in Los Angeles, friendships orged on the firelines led to associations in business and raternal organizations. Those were the glory days of volunteer irefighting. Largely due to inventions of volunteers, fire appa-atus improved and the volunteers were able to battle severe ire: The Great New York Fire of 1835 which was confined to he Wall Street financial district, is perhaps the prime example.

One of the volunteers who fought that fire was Nathaniel Currier, a printer, who immediately thereafter produced the ithograph, ***"The Burning of the Merchant's Exchange,"*** which ltimately led to a series of famous lithographs of American onflagrations. Twenty years later Currier formed a partner-hip with James Merritt Ives. Currier & Ives produced one of he most famous series of Americana lithographs: ***"The Life of Fireman,"*** which are considered to be authentic portrayals of olunteers. Hundreds of songs and dances — including ***"The Empire Hook & Ladder Polka"*** and ***"The Diligent Hose Com-any Quick Step"*** glorified their firefighting and rescue ex-loits as did a number of plays, including the successful Broadway melodrama, ***"A Glance at New York,"*** which cele-rated the adventures of Mose Humphrey, foreman of that ity's Lady Washington Engine Company No. 40.

Unfortunately, the volunteers began to believe their own ublicity as they strove to make themselves more fiercely ompetitive in getting to and fighting fires. From that came the tart of the excesses: Pitched brawls when companies answer-ng alarms got in each other's way; fistfights touched off by rguments over which outfit would use the nearest hydrant. This notoriety overshadowed the valiant firefighting work they performed in cities which could not afford paid fire departments, simply because the hand-operated engines required as many as 60 men to operate.

Unlike Los Angeles, however, many volunteers took advantage of the cities' plight and became politically powerful. In sharp contrast to Los Angeles' volunteers, which numbered 380 at the most, large cities had many more. New York, for example, had at least 6000 volunteers. Fighting fires together, they also voted as a bloc together. That fact was not lost upon Volunteer Firefighter William Marcy Tweed, foreman of New York's Americus Engine Company No. 6, whose rig was emblazoned with a painting of a snarling Bengal tiger. Tweed used his volunteer firefighting association as a springboard to create Tammany Hall, one of the most corrupt political machines in the nation's history. Tammany's symbol was a snarling Bengal tiger.

As the community-spirited business leaders who formed the early volunteer companies grew disgusted, more prosperous and older, they gave up firefighting and moved to suburban areas. Central city stations were taken over by what today would be described as street gangs, notably the Bowery Boys in New York and the Moyamensings in Philadelphia.

Nobody questioned that the volunteers were performing a vital service that cities could not otherwise afford. There were many who preferred to overlook the macho rowdyism of the latter-day volunteers, considering the dangers they faced and their willingness to get out of bed at any time of night, perhaps in the dead of winter with a blizzard howling, to rush off to risk their lives and sometimes die while fighting fires in somebody else's buildings. To the critics of the volunteers' escapades, the Congregational preacher, Henry Ward Beecher, said, "Would you have a company of French dancing masters to extinguish fires?"

The construction in 1852 of the first practical steam-operated fire engine in Cincinnati by Latta & Shawk marked the beginning of the end of the entrenched volunteers. On April 1, 1853, when Cincinnati became the first paid fire department in the United States, Fire Chief Miles Greenwood compared the old way with the new: "Steamers never get drunk. They never throw brickbats. Their only drawback is they can't vote." Steam fire engines could be operated by several firefighters, compared to the dozens required by the volunteers' hand-pumpers. By the start of the War Between the States, the day of big city volunteer fire departments was all but over.

Los Angeles' volunteer firefighting history closely replicated phase one and probably avoided the possible outrages of phase two by the fact that steam fire engines were commonplace years before the Los Angeles Volunteer Fire Department was formed. Los Angeles citizens and public officials, obviously recalling the problems in eastern city volunteerism, took steps to preclude fist fighting over firefighting. Proof of that is in the unusually strict, at least by comparison with eastern departments, of the first Rules and Regulations. One explanation for the excellence of the LAFD during the next century is that tradition of strict and rigidly enforced rules and regulations. Infrequent lapses only served to reinforce that tradition.

The waning days of Los Angeles volunteer firefighting often did not reflect favorably upon the institution. Fearing the inevitable formation of a paid department, the end of traditions long cherished, the volunteers' perception was that they were being faulted for things over which they had absolutely no control. Hurt by what they considered an ungrateful citizenry, there further developed a widening split between the old guard — as represented by chief officers, past and present — and the younger members who directed most of their antipathy toward Chief Engineer Day.

Morale plummeted during the following months. Fewer firefighters answered alarms. The manpower shortage forced citizens to help hook up the suction hoses, lay lines, stoke the steamer boilers and pick up hose. Original Thirty-Eights' active membership fell from 45 to 15 in only six months. Only one of its members showed up at a fire. The company failed to hold required monthly meetings for five straight months. Confidence 2's active rolls dropped to 20 from 60 and they had not met in four months.

What could city officials do? Discharge the volunteers? Hardly. That would leave Los Angeles with no trained firefighters. Fines were not the answer, either, because that money went into the volunteers' treasury for mainly social purposes. Day's leadership came in for more criticism following the 7:58 p.m., April 11, 1885, fire that lit the sky long before the alarm was sounded. Mrs. Joseph Mullaly's home at 217 North Fort (Broadway) Street was all but destroyed by the time the horse-drawn apparatus struggled up what was then a steep hill to reach the fire. Although water was in short supply and the house beyond saving, firefighters were ordered to concentrate on that building rather than protecting Mrs. I.W. Lord's house nearby which was ignited by radiant heat.

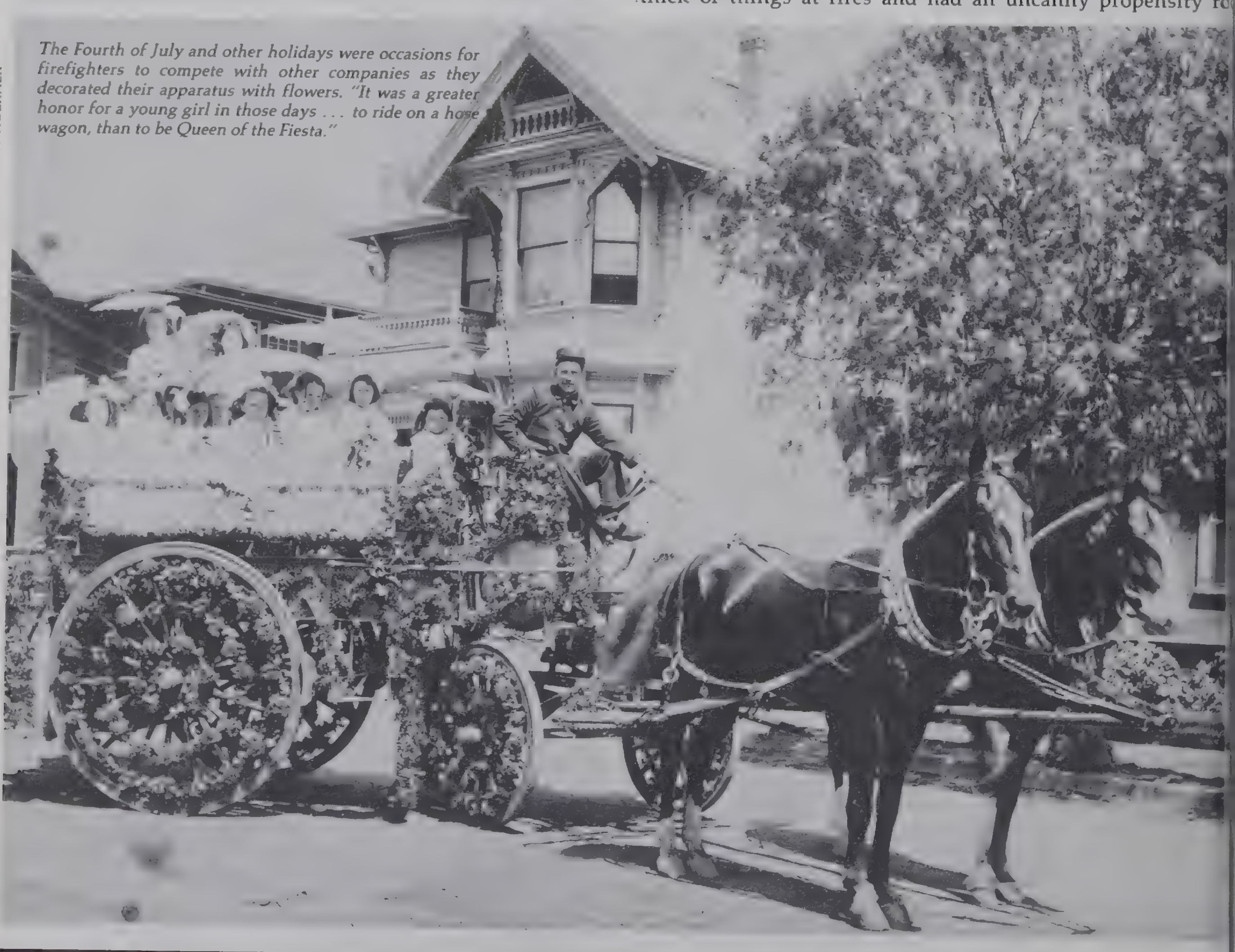
Nozzleman Fred Stoermer and two other volunteers of Confidence 2 were struck by falling timber. Stoermer suffered a dislocated right ankle, plus head, arm and rib bruises. The others escaped with only bruises and sprains. The firefighters were apparently ordered into an attack position which was not only overly dangerous but futile. These are perhaps the first recorded injuries in the line of duty suffered by Los Angeles firefighters. If any volunteers were killed, the details cannot be determined from available records.

The ***Times*** said of the incident in the following day's paper
"The boys of the department worked like tigers and what ha
been said in criticism is not aimed at them. The defect whic
the fire again made painfully apparent is the lack of efficien
and recognized leadership. There seemed to be no directio
and the scene degenerated into pandemonium, while the grea
crowd stood by and jeered."

The deepening demoralization among the volunteers wa
evidenced when one of them spoke out against Day in th
September 24, 1885, ***Times:***

"When we first took him into our company he was a prett
good sort of fellow, but he couldn't stand prosperity. When h
got to be Assistant (Chief) Engineer he began to get puffed u
Getting into council made him a good deal worse; and since w
elected him chief engineer last March, nobody can touch hi
with a pole. I'd like to see him run again . . . for chief enginee
. . . We'd snow him under so bad he'd never know what hi
him. Yes sir! Frank Day has done more than any other on
thing to break up the fire department — and next to him come
the plan of a paid system. He knows nothing about the busi
ness of chief, won't learn anything and is running things o
the rule-or-ruin plan."

Little is known of Day and he apparently did not deign t
reply. In his defense, however, the unanswerable questio
must be asked: If he was as bad as the volunteers claimed h
was as their assistant chief, why did they go one step furthe
and later elect him chief engineer? Whatever the case, ther
is no doubt that Day liked nothing better than to be in th
thick of things at fires and had an uncanny propensity fo



The Fourth of July and other holidays were occasions for firefighters to compete with other companies as they decorated their apparatus with flowers. "It was a greater honor for a young girl in those days . . . to ride on a hose wagon, than to be Queen of the Fiesta."

FROM THE COLLECTION OF LARRY HOERNER

etting hurt.

At 6:50 p.m., September 30, 1885, firefighters were called to ames consuming the wood-framed Los Angeles Stencil and Nickel Plating Works at 239 Spring Street. Fire had communiated to a next door carpentry shop at 237 Spring Street. Reorts say the buildings were "burning like an oil tank" even efore the volunteers' arrival. Minutes after Day took charge, e suffered a badly-cut right hand when he was struck by the oupling of a hose being unreeled. The fire was unfortunate for Day and an unrelated occurrence resulted in much of the itizenry turning against the volunteers.

"An immense crowd of people blocked Spring Street during ne progress of the fire," said the ***Times.*** "A great many got ecked as the firemen several times turned the hose full on the eople without any apparent necessity." From that first meetng in Buffum's Saloon, it had taken a quarter of a century of ountless public-spirited citizens to voluntarily bring orgaized fire protection in Los Angeles to its pinnacle, despite ncredible problems, and it was taking only a few months to nreaten to bring the whole system crashing down in disgrace.

Morale among volunteers fell as low as it ever would until an mazing incident occurred on the night of October 16, only 16 ays after the Spring Street debacle. Around 9 p.m., vapors rom a fuel oil spill were accidentally ignited in the basement f the Women's Christian Temperance Union Coffee House at 6 South Main Street. The flashing fire spread flames throughut the basement and they gnawed up into the first floor of the wo-story brick building. Large buildings to the north and outh were severely exposed.

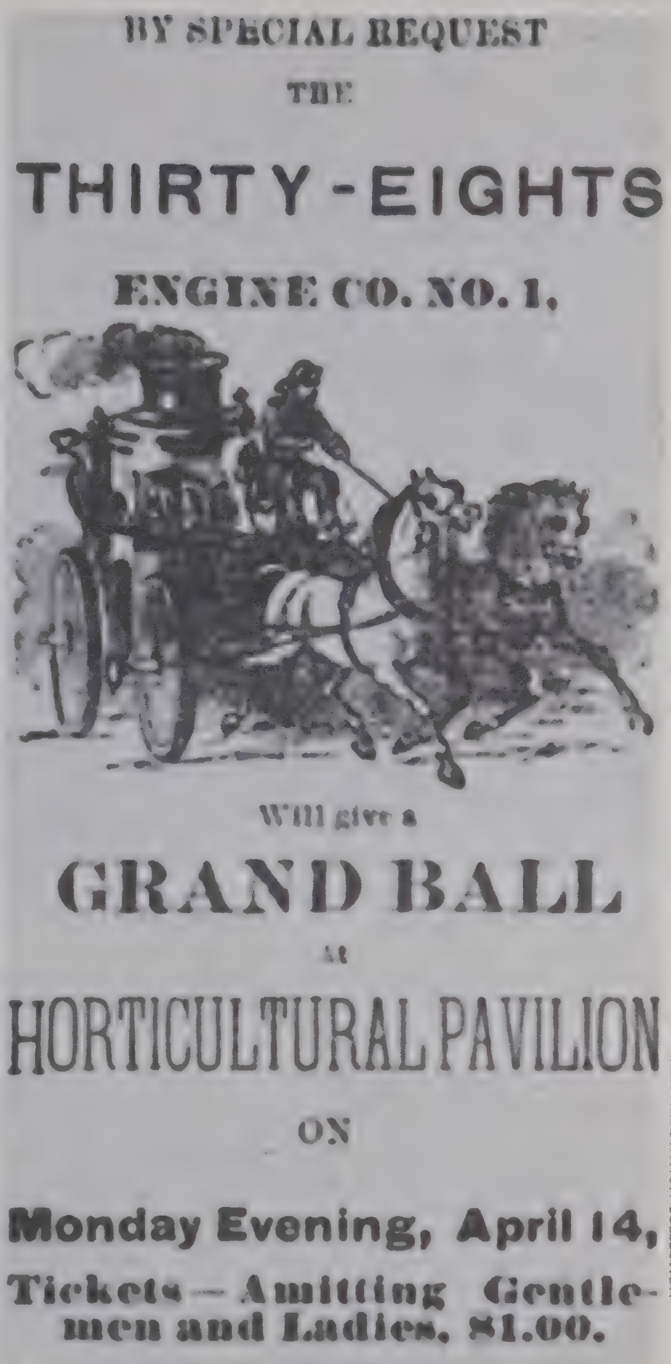
The volunteers put aside their resentments and, true to their radition, rushed to the scene, some of them from a perfornance in the nearby Grand Opera House. Flames were by now xtending along the entire rear of the coffee house while large olumes of smoke gushed from the basement.

Original Thirty-Eights took a hydrant at the corner of Second and Main Streets while hosemen stretched two lines. With moke chuffing from its boiler stack, the engine was quickly ble to supply two streams. Volunteers used one of them while oring through the broken front windows and deluging the asement. The other line was laid through the next-door exposure, Hoyt's Second Hand Store, to begin attacking flames in he rear of the WCTU building.

Confidence volunteers suctioned off the First and Main treets hydrant and tackled the front of the fire with two lines s black smoke belched from the engine's stack and the stoker hoveled in more coal and still more coal. Park Hose connected o the hydrant at First and Los Angeles Streets and, using ydrant pressure, took their line to the rear where they joined Original Thirty-Eights.

A quick second alarm was almost immediately followed by a eneral alarm calling out the city's entire volunteer force. Chief Engineer Day arrived. As he took command, a falling shard of window glass severely gashed his head. Drenched in blood, he ontinued to direct front and rear firefighting as the volunteers ought their way inside the smoke-clogged building after tying wet sponges over their noses; probably the first recorded use of breathing apparatus in Los Angeles' firefighting history.

The volunteers snaked their lines through the thick smoke nd down the stairs to battle the basement fire while other irefighters, in a superb example of firefighting teamwork, drove back the fire in the rear and knocked down the first floor ire: all of this in less than an hour. The incredible feat prompted the ***Times*** to observe, "The city of Los Angeles may thank ts fire department that there was not a half million dollar blaze aying in ashes the entire row (of buildings) from the Foster block north to and including the Grand Opera House. It ooked at one time as though such a result was inevitable. Contending as they did with a blind (basement) fire, the firemen accomplished wonders. None of their efforts was misdirected."



BY SPECIAL REQUEST

THE

THIRTY-EIGHTS

ENGINE CO. NO. 1,

Will give a

GRAND BALL

AT

HORTICULTURAL PAVILION

ON

Monday Evening, April 14,

Tickets—Amitting Gentlemen and Ladies, $1.00.

FROM THE OLD PLAZA FIRE STATION COLLECTION

Newspaper advertisements helped to spread the word of gala Grand Ball celebrations. Those of Thirty-Eights Engine Company No. 1 were especially well-attended by the city's elite and were regarded as a major social event of the year.

The WCTU fire was the volunteers' last hurrah. On December 11, 1885, close to two months later, Mayor Spense signed Ordinance No. 205 into law and created the Los Angeles Fire Department, effective January 12, 1886. The ordinance established a three-member Board of Fire Commissioners consisting of the mayor, the president of the city council and the chief engineer selected by the council.

The commissioners, serving without pay, were given the

FROM THE COLLECTION OF LARRY HOERNER

Competition was keen among firefighters as they attempted to surpass other fire companies with elaborate decorations during parades marking holidays and other civic occasions. A model of the Pilgrims' Mayflower *topped the flower-decked hose bed of this apparatus.*

legal responsibility to "perform all acts necessary to prepare and manage the fire department." Meetings were to be held at 2 p.m., every Monday, in City Council chambers, or oftener if necessary. The council reserved the right to elect a chief engineer with the added title, fire marshal, for a two-year (shortly thereafter, an amendment made it one year) term. The chief engineer and fire marshal could not be a fire commissioner at the time of his election and served at the pleasure of the council which could, at any time, discharge him for "inefficiency, misconduct, of malfeasance in office upon written charges, due investigation and a fair trial." The board was to appoint the assistant chief as well as all firefighters.

Day was the obvious candidate for this position as the LAFD's first chief engineer and fire marshal. He declined. When submitting his January 5, 1886, resignation, Day said he expected to be away from Los Angeles a great deal of time. His resignation seemed to spur more volunteers to sign up to be considered for appointment to the LAFD. Councilman Kuhrts agreed to serve until such time as the council chose a chief.

The ordinance brought four of the city's six volunteer companies into the LAFD, changed their names to numbers, and absorbed all the station's equipment into the paid department. At the time the department became paid, all stations were rented. That situation was to continue for some time. Engine (Original 38's and Confidence 2) rosters were set at one engineer, one engine driver, one cart driver and four hosemen for each of the two steam fire engines. Presumably, that meant two men would be assigned to each of two operable hoselin supplied by the engines. Hook & Ladder (Vigilance) Compan No. 1 was to be manned by a driver, a tillerman, a foreman an four laddermen. Hose Company (Park Hose) No. 1's crew wa held to a driver, a foreman and four hosemen.

Prospective LAFD members were to apply to the fire com mission for consideration of their qualifications and appoin ment. The minimun age was put at 21 and each applicant wa required "to be a United States citizen, a permanent resident the city of Los Angeles and able to converse understandably i the English language." The rule was quickly amended to r quire proof of one-year residency in the city. There is, une plainedly, no mention in the ordinance of credit for past se vice as a volunteer.

Monthly pay scales ranged from $125 for the chief engine to $60 to the tillerman. Pay raises, or cuts, were at the council discretion. Firefighters were removable by the board. Employ ment permanency depended upon what the chief engineer an fire commissioners judged to be satisfactory performance. Th ordinance also established a reserve or call force of six officer and 24 members who were paid from $144 to $180 a yea depending upon their rank.

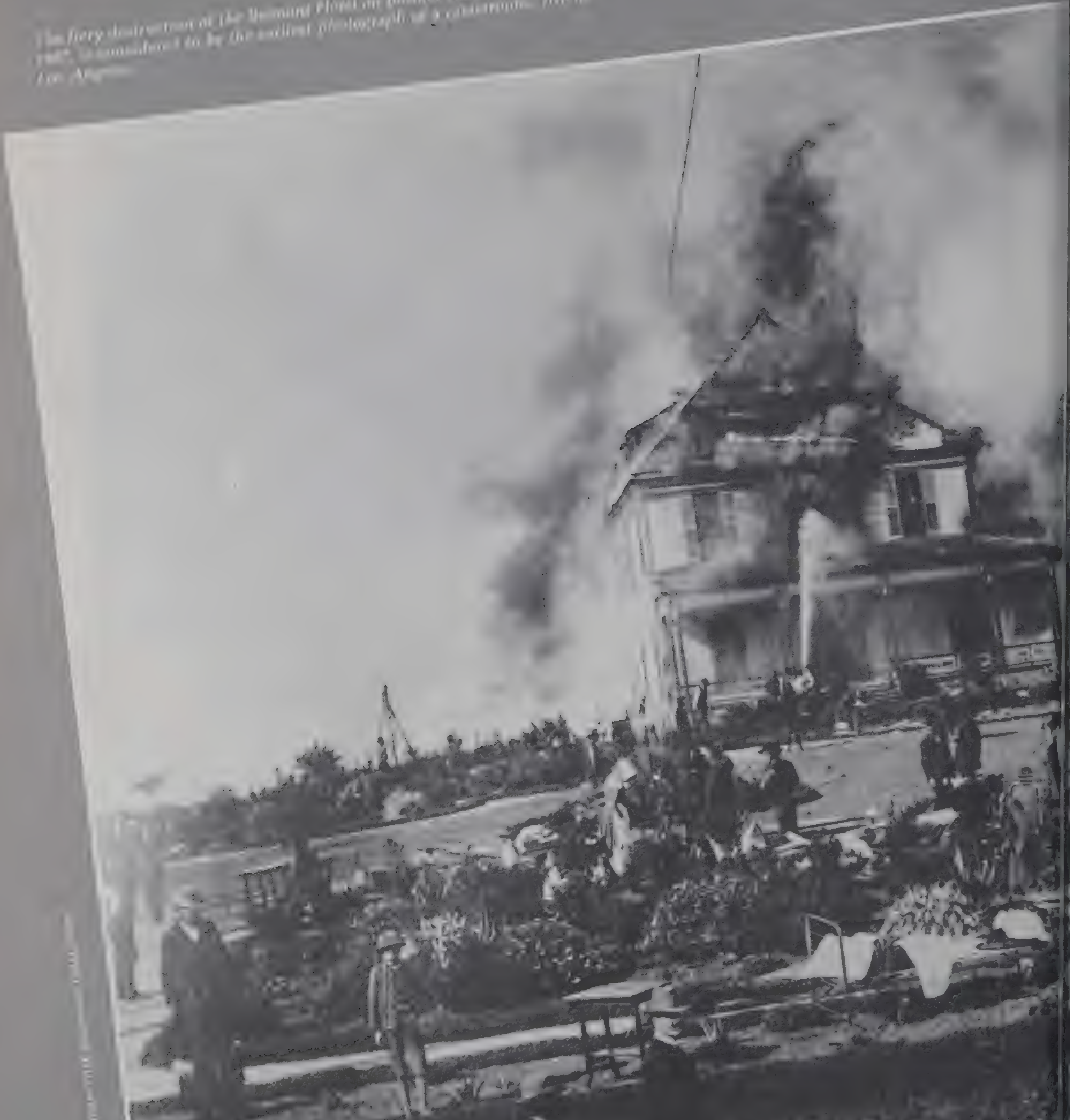
The Fire Commission held its first meeting, January 18 1886, and Spense, City Council President Hiram Sinsabaug and Councilman (Interim Chief Engineer) Kuhrts took the oat of office. Commissioners elected Moore as board secretary. Th commission held its second meeting three days later an ssed the LAFD's first set of 32 rules and regulations. Many those rules evidenced the fire commissioners' intent to avoid oblems that had tended to overshadow the service and acmplishments of volunteers in other cities and which had, to me extent, slopped over into the paid department. Among em:

- **_Rule 18:_ Cautioned engine, hose and hook and ladder drivers not to drive out of a trot in going to or returning from fires and alarms and, further, racing was strictly prohibited.**
- **_Rule 19:_ The engine and hook and ladder houses shall be closed on Sundays. No loud or boisterous talking, profane or obscene language shall be permitted in or about the houses of the department. Intoxicating liquors must not be kept or allowed to be drank (sic) in any of the houses of the department and gambling is strictly prohibited.**
- **_Rule 21:_ Pertained to suspension or dismissal of members who refused or neglected to pay any just debt contracted during their connection with the fire department.**
- **_Rule 22:_ Eliminated 'political boss' tactics so prevalent in eastern cities by forbidding officers and members to distribute tickets at any general or municipal election.**
- **_Rule 23:_ Stipulated that destruction of property by water at fires was inefficient firemanship.**
- **_Rule 28:_ Cautioned that any fireman charged with being under the influence of intoxicants was to be suspended.**

Before adjourning, the fire commissioners voted to ask the council to expedite selection of a fire chief. McLain and Moore were among those nominated. Councilman James Velsir objected that Moore lived on the outskirts of the city at Figueroa and Pico Streets — too far, said the councilman, to be quickly available to lead firefighters. True enough, replied Moore's advocates. But if Moore was needed, a telephone company operator could reach him by ringing his phone five times, then twice. Moore could, by horse, quickly get anywhere in the city. The final vote, 9-1, was for Moore. At the January 28, 1886, commission meeting, Moore resigned as secretary and was officially sworn as the LAFD's first chief engineer and fire marshal. The commission also appointed Dan A. Moriarty to the post of assistant chief. Prior to adjournment, the commission voted to buy five tons of hay, 40 sacks of rolled barley and six sacks of bran for the horse.

The volunteers, meanwhile, stood ready to answer alarms during the changeover. Many of the younger members opted to join the fully-paid department and were appointed. The Los Angeles Volunteer Fire Department died quickly and quietly. There is no record of any official recognition of many years of service by the volunteers whose efforts largely were responsible for the Los Angeles Fire Department getting off to an efficient start when it went in service on the morning of February 1, 1886.

CHAPTER II



The fiery destruction of the Belmont Hotel on Bunker Hill, December 10, 1887, is considered to be the earliest photograph of a catastrophic fire in Los Angeles.

FIREFIGHTERS GET AN EVERLASTING GIFT

The first year of service by the Los Angeles Fire Department was mostly marked by efforts to beef up fire protection in a city in transition.

Los Angeles' temperate climate was continuing to bring increasing numbers of tourists to the city's hotels.

Agriculture and associated industries continued to dominate the economy. The rate wars between the Southern Pacific Railroad and the Santa Fe Railway were largely responsible for encouraging a phenomenal population growth. In 1880 Los Angeles had 11,000 people. During the next few years population would grow tenfold.

The city's economy was, however, rapidly diversifying into light and heavy industries serving not only the Southern California market but northern and eastern markets linked to Los Angeles by the transcontinental railroad systems. City limits were, moreover, pushing north, east and especially to the west with the start of the Wilshire subdivision. That Los Angeles was growing into adolescence was further evidenced by the paving of Main, Spring, Fort (Broadway) and Hill Streets.

Population growth, increasing numbers of wood-frame houses and hotels, new industrial complexes sprouting along the railroad corridors, altogether compounded an already bad situation. With an inadequate water supply, an antiquated and undependable fire alarm system and too few fire stations and apparatus, the question was not whether Los Angeles would suffer catastrophic fires, but when? How long would the city's luck hold out, given the foretaste of what was inevitably going to happen. Firefighters recalled large fires fought by volunteers shortly before the changeover to a paid department?

Cognizant of Los Angeles' growth and escalating fire problems, the LAFD fortunately had strong friends in the City Council, notably Kuhrts, who lobbied hard to prioritize fire protection improvements: a faster and more reliable system of transmitting alarms to firehouses by firemen: telephones or telegraph. Indicative of the fact that the water problem was growing faster than a solution was the March 1, 1886, request that the fire commission approve a fire hydrant at Washington and Figueroa Streets, at that time a remote area which was starting to experience construction growth. The commission subsequently asked the council to prohibit the city's privately-owned water company from installing hydrant-supplying mains of less than four inches in diameter and to modify existing hydrants to those minimum standards.

To enable the chief engineer to get to fires faster, the commission on April 12, 1886, authorized purchase of a horse and buggy to be kept at night in a barn behind Moore's home. The barn was outfitted with a swinging drop harness for a quick-hitch of the horse by a callman who slept in the barn and drove Moore to fires. It would become traditional to often name horses according to their temperament. Moore's horse, Cyclone, had a stormy disposition and was soon replaced by a more tractable animal.

Firefighters got a portent of what was to occur in Los Angeles when they learned of the 2:20 a.m., June 28, 1886, explosion and fire which destroyed a block of buildings, including Phillips & Sons' Department Store, the post office and the Leading Wind Saloon in San Pedro. The rapidly-growing seaport community, many miles south of Los Angeles, had no organized fire protection, so railroad workers used water suctioned from the bay by a locomotive to fight the flames. Not until 1895 would the San Pedro Volunteer Fire Department be formed with 65 members, three hose companies, one hook and ladder and a chemical rig—all hand-drawn. Little did LAFD firefighters realize that San Pedro and the area around it would one day become part of Los Angeles and, as one of the world's major seaports, become the locale of some of the city's worst explosions and fires.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF BILL DAHLQUIST

Recognizing need for Chief Engineer Walter S. Moore (right) to get to fires faster, the fire commission voted to buy a horse and buggy to be kept at night in a barn behind Moore's home at Pico Boulevard and Figueroa Street. The barn was outfitted with a swinging drop harness for a quick-hitch by Moore's driver who slept in the barn.

Notable during the LAFD's first year was the start of a tradition when the fire commission voted for inspections of all stations, personnel, equipment and horses. The first was scheduled for 9 a.m., July 5, 1886. Contemporary accounts show these inspections were not—as they would be many years later—carried out by higher-ranking officers. Early inspection parties included the mayor, the council president, a councilman—all acting in their roles as fire commissioners—the chief engineer, the assistant chief engineer, newspaper reporters and interested citizens. Days and sometimes weeks went into preparations for annual inspections which started at Engine 1 and usually proceeded to companies in numerical order or geographical proximity.

A synthesis of reports found at the Old Plaza Fire Station affords insight into some of these early inspections; one of which began shortly after 7 p.m., and came as a surprise to every member of the department, including Moore and Assistant Chief Moriarty, who were simply notified to "hold themselves in readiness to conduct the commissioners about town." That should have been a tip-off, but apparently it was not.

The inspection party that night, probably in 1886 or 1887, consisted of Mayor William H. Workman, Council President L.L. Breed, Councilman Kuhrts and a reporter for the ***Los Angeles Express***. Their carriage followed Moore's buggy with Moriarty riding beside him. First stop was Engine 1's Old Plaza Station where the inspection party thoroughly inspected the quarters "even going to the trouble to climb the steep stairway and look about the scrupulously neat and even ornate sleeping rooms of the men," wrote the ***Express*** reporter.

Moore then ordered Foreman Henry Scherer to "hook up the horses." Scherer told the firefighters to line up alongside the rigs. Warning the inspection party to stand clear, he tugged a the gong rope. The clang caused the engine horses, Tom and Joe, to bolt from their stalls and dash to their positions under the harness that was suspended from the ceiling. Ned, a large sorrel, similarly hurried to the front of the two-wheeled hose reel. The horses stood quietly while waiting for the drivers to tug their ropes which dropped the harness gear over the animals. Other firefighters quickly fastened the harnesses and the rigs were ready to answer an alarm. From the sounding of the gong until the hames were fastened, only about a minute elapsed.

(LAFD lore credits Firefighter Edward R. Smith, an engine driver, with inventing the hanging, quick-hitch harnesses around 1886. History shows otherwise. Quick-hitch harnesses were invented in 1871 by firefighters in St. Joseph, Missouri and in Allegheny, Pennsylvania. In July, 1873, Charles E. Berry, a Cambridge, Massachusetts, firefighter developed the hanging harness with quick-locking hames. When the harness dropped, a system of pulleys, counterweights and springs lifted the holders out of the way. It is, therefore, more appropriate to credit Smith with improving upon these earlier inventions.)

After the surprise inspection party completed its rounds and the firefighters were commended for their efficiency and station maintenance, Foreman Scherer lightened the formality of the occasion by ordering Ned to show them a trick. The horse fetched a bucket and, with his teeth, turned on a spigot. When the bucket was filled, he drank.

The inspection party proceeded to Hook and Ladder Company No. 1. It would be naive to believe that the ladder company firefighters were surprised. Records indicate that stations were equipped with telephones. Old Plaza firefighters most likely called the ladder company and alerted them immediately after the inspection party's departure. Those firefighters, in turn, probably called the next station in line and the tip-off of the imminent surprise inspection was thus passed along what can only be described as a grapevine. We can speculate that today's term, grapevine, which refers to the non-LAFD telephone in all stations for firefighters' personal use, perhaps

&LADDER
CO. No 1

A matched set of snow-white Percherons was the special pride of Hook and Ladder, Truck No. 1, a Hayes' aerial.

LAFD PHOTO

riginated as a result of that first surprise inspection.

Ladder company firefighters proudly told the inspection arty that a recent visitor from the San Francisco Fire Department told them they were "the best organized and trained addermen," he had ever seen. The company's special pride, owever, was reserved for the matched set of snow-white orses, Ned and Joe. Before the horses were assigned to the adder company they were regarded by firefighters at other tations as among the most awkward in the department. The addermen brought them to the peak of their training in only hree months. After the hitch-up routine, they were ordered, "Get back there, boys!" The horses walked back to their stalls, urned around and backed into them.

An account of another inspection, probably around 1887, was found nearly a century later in the Old Plaza firehouse and ells what an inspection party learned at Engine Company No. 2. Driver "Si" Lyons called the group's attention to the two dapple gray horses which he claimed were the fastest in the department. "It takes at least a year to adapt a horse to the equirements of the department," said Lyons.

The commissioners were introduced at that inspection to "Old Joe" Bruson, driver of the hose cart, whose "mammoth proportion of abdominal development is as nearly imitated by hat of his horse, Major,. . . as can (be) possible, and of whom oe says he will eat more grub and grumble more over it than I ever did in my life."

Engine 2 also had a station mascot, Chief, which the sober-faced firefighters said "is the handsomest man in the department—only he's a dog." Chief ran to every fire immediately ahead of the horses, while managing to keep out of the way of their hooves. He barked and encouraged the horses to greater speed with affectionate leaps at their noses as he bounded down the street in the lead.

Chief belonged to Engineer Mike Curran, who apparently lived next door to the station. Curran said he often sent the dog o the market with money in his mouth for what "Mrs. Curran wants to buy." Recalling an alarm the previous week, Curran said the dog was at the time leaving a store with a tenderloin steak in his mouth. Chief dropped the steak in a mud puddle and streaked back to the firehouse. He arrived just in time as the horses turned out of the station with the engine and hose reel.

Annual inspections turned into citywide celebrations. In July, 1888, the council voted $300 to fund a parade with a band leading a procession of the city's fire companies, along with invited members of the Exempt Firemen's Association. As the tradition grew, parades were followed by afternoon picnics with athletic contests and an evening banquet. The reserve call force, meanwhile, stood by in the stations to answer any alarms. Each year seemed to bring a new touch to festivities. Firefighters draped patriotic bunting and other decorations over the front of their stations and on street lights adjacent to quarters. In 1896, firefighters of Chemical Company No. 4 took a day off without pay (which went to their reserve callmen) while the paid firefighters varnished, painted and otherwise prepared their rig for the annual inspection and parade. Chemical 4 won that year's prize for the best decorated rig in the festivities.

But all this pomp and ceremony could not camouflage dire problems confronting the department. On July 26, 1886, the council only partially addressed the need for an efficient alarm system by voting the purchase of an additional blunderbuss and a 2000-pound bell to be mounted atop a wooden LAFD training tower which would be built the following year at First and Hill Streets. Pending more definitive solutions, the commission voted on December 20, 1886, to ask the council to order the two telephone companies serving Los Angeles to direct all fire calls to the police department. Presumably, an officer on horseback would then be sent to the nearest fire station if it did not have a telephone.

Sounding of fire alarms was improved by the purchase of a 2000-pound bell which was mounted atop a wooden fire department training tower at First and Hill Streets in 1887.

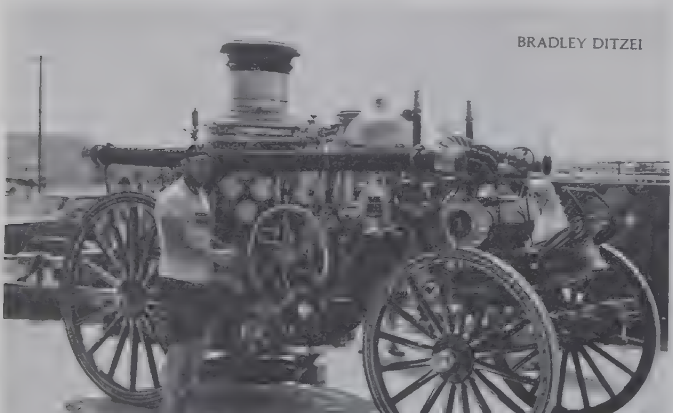
FROM THE COLLECTION OF HARRY MORCK

Exactly how the alarm system operated during the first years of the LAFD is not clear. It is clear the system did not work well. All firehouses were eventually equipped with blunderbusses which therefore strongly indicates that gunfire continued to be the primary means of sounding an alarm. Shortly after the bell was mounted atop the drill tower, a hardwire system was installed to retransmit the alarms to fire stations. There were, in 1886, only around 50 fireboxes in the city; all of them in the downtown district. More had to be ordered. The one-ton bell caused problems, too. While clanging an alarm, a sound which reverberated throughout the city, telephone company switchboards became jammed as citizens asked the location of the fire. There is strong evidence that at least one private alarm company hired young men who, by running or by bicycle, hurried to fire stations when the company received an alarm from a subscriber.

Most, if not all, firehouses had inside and outside bells. In a city surfeited with bells, false alarms were common. The commission on August 13, 1886, asked Police Chief L. G. Loomis to "prohibit the ringing of gongs by fish peddlers, hoky-poke (street vendors) and ice cream men and wagons having gongs similar in sound to the fire department's." The LAFD's alarm and water supply problems would continue well into the twentieth century.

Compared to those problems, funding and acquisition of badly-needed additional pumpers breezed through the council. On October 18, 1886, the LAFD ordered its first fire engine, another Amoskeag, which was named Jacob Kuhrts Engine Company No. 3. Although the 700-gallon-per-minute pumper was similar to the earlier engines, it had the latest pumping and maneuverability features. The engine, which arrived in the city early in 1887, stood nearly 8½-feet tall, was 23-feet, 7-inches in overall length, six-feet wide and weighed 7800 pounds.

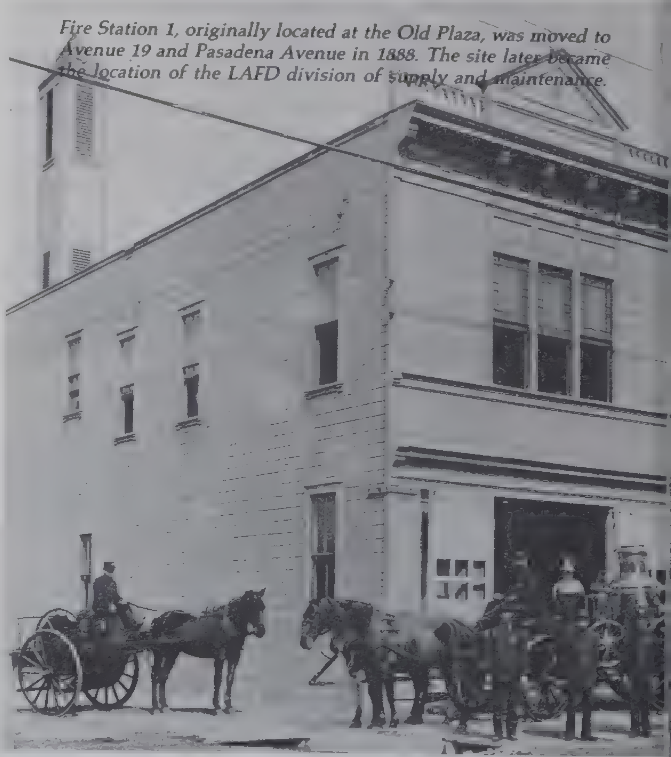
More than 1000 people, including Mayor Workman, Kuhrts and other councilmen, watched acceptance tests at the Beaudry Water Works. Steam was raised in four minutes, five seconds. Drafting through 20 feet of suction hose, the engine delivered a vertical stream at least 300 feet through 150 feet of two-and-one-half-inch hose. The crowd cheered that feat as well as Driver Si Lyons' demonstration of how the horses could, from a standing start, turn the rig completely around in only 20 feet. The new engine was assigned to the Old Plaza Station and its Amoskeag was moved to a newly-rented firehouse at 114 West Third Street. (The Jacob Kuhrts engine was restored by a volunteer group of department members during the LAFD's centennial celebration.)


BRADLEY DITZEL

The J. Kuhrts Engine Company No. 3 was restored by a volunteer group of LAFD members, including Tony Zar (above) Lane Kemper, Larry Hoerner and Mort Schuman to coincide with the centennial celebration in 1986.

Soon after the Jacob Kuhrts went in service, the LAF bought a 700-gallon-per-minute (second size) Ahrens stea pumper from the Ahrens Manufacturing Company of Cincin nati. The company was a successor to the Latta & Shaw Company which built the first successful steam fire engine i America. Ahrens enjoyed as good a reputation as Amoskea and some 700 Ahrens were ultimately purchased by fire de partments. It is not known why the LAFD switched to a Ahrens. Probably Chris Ahrens, company president, wh would later become famous as the builder of Ahrens-Fox mo torized fire engines, was low bidder. The Ahrens steamer wa named Walter S. Moore Engine Company No. 4 and was firs stationed at the Old Plaza firehouse.

Station designations were confusing in the early years of th LAFD. As explained by Firefighter Don Dodd of Engine 61 an a member of the LAFD's historical society: "When engine changed locations, the station number was changed to corre spond with the engine number." Thus, the Old Plaza becam Station 3 when it housed the Kuhrts and Station 4 when th Ahrens went in service. The department meanwhile opene still another station at 1901 Pasadena Avenue at Hayes Stree (Avenue 19) where the LAFD's division of supply and mainten ance is today located.


Fire Station 1, originally located at the Old Plaza, was moved to Avenue 19 and Pasadena Avenue in 1888. The site later became the location of the LAFD division of supply and maintenance.

Mort Schuman, LAFD steamer authority and member of the Kuhrts restoration group, as well as the LAFD historical society, explained how most steam fire engines operated in the March, 1985, issue of ***"The Firemen's Grapevine:"***

"Steam is produced by burning coal in a firebox mounted in the bottom section of the steamer's boiler. The heat rises through many hollow tubes that are surrounded by water inside the tank. . . Eventually, the water is heated to a temperature high enough to produce steam. This steam then passes through a control valve and is used to drive the two-cylinder steam engine which is mounted against the forward side of the boiler and supported by the steamer's framework.

"The steam engine and the water pump are connected to a common crankshaft. The main bearings for the crankshaft are supported by the steamer's framework. This compact, highlyficient combination needs no clutch, road transmission, or rive line of any kind. Maintenance is almost nil. To add to the mplicity of operation, the piston-type water pump is self-timing. Coal for the steamer is carried in a fuel basket made f sheet iron and attached to the rear of the engine. It is large nough to carry sufficient fuel for about one hour's consump-on by the engine when pumping. By today's standards, the ld steam pumpers operated at an extremely low (350-550) evolutions per minute which is slower than most diesel en-ines can idle."

During the height of the steamer era, there were about 100 team fire engine manufacturers; some of whom produced otary, rather than piston, pumpers. The LAFD and other ma-or departments had coal wagons in their apparatus fleet and ey would answer calls to larger fires where additional fuel as required. The steamer operator called for bags of coal by lowing the engine's whistle.

Starting on July 4, 1887, the relative calm of the LAFD was hattered by a long seige of major fires. Shortly before mid-ight a police officer was walking his beat in the Sonora Town istrict, where Mexican immigrants traditionally settled near he Old Plaza to establish businesses and homes. The patrol-nan was startled by a muffled explosion and saw flames in the enter of a stove factory and warehouse complex. Two months arlier, an arsonist had tried to torch the large single-story vood-frame building at the northwest corner of New High treet and Belleview Avenue. The officer pulled the nearby ox 22 at 11:55 p.m. Flames had engulfed the entire structure nd walls were crumbling even before the Old Plaza's Kuhrts ngine and other companies arrived. Within 30 minutes the omplex lay in blazing ruins. The fully-insured loss was 30,000.

Less than three weeks later, a severe fire embroiled the LAFD n a political, social and economic issue that had been smolder-ng for more than 16 years. The problem revolved around Chinatown, a long block of single-story adobe and wood hov-els immediately adjacent to the east of the Old Plaza Station. The early Spanish named the block Calle de los Negros. Later he street was shown on city maps as Negro Alley or Nigger Alley. The latter term was most often colloquially used; not as n insulting term as it would be today, but because blacks who were former slaves often adopted Nigger as their first name. One of Los Angeles' most famous characters, for example, called herself Nigger Molly and answered to no other name.

On October 23, 1871, the block was occupied by immigrant Chinese, many of whom had drifted to Los Angeles after work-ng on the transcontinental railroad. No ethnic group that ever ived in Los Angeles was more despised than the Chinese; argely because they worked for pay lower than that which could sustain white wage earners, together with the fact the Los Angeles' citizenry refused to understand their culture.

A fight that day erupted between several Chinese and whites. A white man was mortally shot. Like wildfire, word spread that the Chinese were rioting and killing all white people. A mob descended upon Nigger Alley. Nineteen Chi-ese were either lynched or killed by citizens' gunfire. No white person was found guilty; mainly because the Chinese were legally forbidden the right to testify.

During the next decade, gambling parlors, opium dens and houses of prostitution lined both sides of the block which was jam-packed with Chinese stores, houses and their shrine. Nigger Alley became as infamous in Los Angeles as San Francisco's Barbary Coast. City officials and the business establishment unsuccessfully sought to demolish the block and to extend Los Angeles Street, which ended at Nigger Alley, to the Old Plaza, thus opening up more real estate parcels for commercial development and land speculation.

Badge of Chief Engineer Thomas Strohm, who was first appointed to the position on October 1, 1887.

There had been many attempts to torch the Chinatown block before that Sunday afternoon, July 24, 1887. Only a few days earlier, San Francisco insurance companies cancelled all policies in Chinatown. At 2:30 p.m., at least three separate fires were discovered at the rear of Chung Wah's grocery at No. 23 Nigger Alley. The alarm was but a short run for Old Plaza station firefighters who were quickly joined by other companies.

With flames spreading rapidly through the flimsy buildings, Moriarty called for a second alarm which brought Moore to take command. Within 30 minutes, about 16 buildings were involved or destroyed as flames spread toward Alameda Street. One hour after the fire started, all buildings between No. 9 and No. 43 Nigger Alley lay in ruins with only their adobe walls barely standing.

A police officer arrested Ah Joe, a merchant, when he saw him trying to set fire to a building near No. 43 Nigger Alley. Another Chinese, Chung Wing, fired a shot at a white man who was attempting to torch a house of prostitution. A police officer reported that he saw a fire commissioner starting still another blaze. The officer said the commissioner told him, "Let the damn place burn down." The officer, obviously fearful of losing his job, steadfastly refused to name the commissioner and the issue was dropped. Public opinion about Chinatown was such that the overwhelming belief was that anybody caught setting fire to Nigger Alley should get a medal, not a jail term.

The ***Los Angeles Times*** reported later that day: "The fire department responded promptly to the call, but did not seem to make themselves masters of the situation." On the following day the ***Times*** added: "From the actions of quite a number who watched the firefighters closely, there is a strong suspicion that the hose would have been cut had the firefighters showed a very decided desire to get the fire under control too soon. At any rate, the firemen were not in any great hurry about saving the old shells and the fire burned merrily on until the most objectional portion of the shantydom was destroyed."

Not until 9 o'clock Monday morning were Moore and Moriarty satisfied the fire would go no further as firefighters wet down the smoking ruins of 25 Chinatown buildings, including about eight gambling dens and perhaps as many opium parlors and houses of prostitution. The ***Times*** and city officials renewed the campaign to demolish Chinatown and were successful. Los Angeles Street was cut through to the Old Plaza and land developers reaped a windfall.

In response to complaints about the LAFD's lack of aggressiveness in fighting the blaze, the fire commissioners issued a statement: "If there was any 'throwing off' on the part of the firemen in consequence of the fire being in Chinatown, the commission have (sic) no knowledge of it and would severely condemn any action of that kind. We consider it the duty of the fire department to protect the property in all and every portion of the city regardless of locality, sentiment, prejudice or ownership and if any citizen knows of his own knowledge of any dereliction of duty on the part of any fireman in the city, the fire commissioners will esteem it a favor if such citizen will report the same to the commissioners."

The issue was officially closed on October 3 when the fire commission said there was "no cause to censure the fire department for dereliction of duty in the matter." By then, the LAFD had a new chief engineer, Thomas Strohm, who was appointed only two days earlier after Moore's sudden resignation on September 26. It is probably doubtful his decision had much to do with the Chinatown fire. His was a pragmatic choice. With no pension to anticipate, a family to support and his grocery business in deep trouble because his chief engineer's duties took so much of his time, Moore had no other choice but to quit.

The ever-loyal Kuhrts had once again stepped into the void and served as interim chief for five days until Strohm was chosen. Including his terms as chief engineer of the volunteers and the LAFD, Kuhrts headed the department four times between 1880 and 1887: over three years of total service as chief. When Moore resigned he did not, of course, realize that he would become the only other man to equal Kuhrts' four-term record and, including his term as volunteer chief, exceed it. Moore was to serve as chief engineer two more times for a total of ten years as he led the LAFD into the twentieth century.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE OLD PLAZA FIRE STATION

CHIEF
W.S. MOORE.
LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT
1897

Badge of Walter S. Moore, first chief engineer of the LAFD. The jewel-studded badge, believed to have been presented to him during a ceremonial occasion in 1897, is the earliest known chief engineer's badge still in existence.

In addition to their obvious dedication to the LAFD and th they served as chief engineers, Strohm, Moore and Kuhr shared something else in common. All three were grocer Strohm barely became chief engineer when he demonstrate he was to become one of the most hell-for-leather chiefs th LAFD would ever see. And one with a fierce temper, too. Th rookie chief engineer's first large fire was, moreover, the mo destructive in the history of Los Angeles up to that time.

Strohm had been chief engineer less than a month on Frida October 28, 1887. Fridays were oil days in Los Angeles. On th day the Santa Fe Railway prioritized freight traffic into the cit with a trainload of wooden boxcars containing five-gallon can of fuel oil. The eight-car oil train pulled alongside the Santa F freight depot at the eastern foot of First Street. The 100-foo wide, 600-foot-long depot was only a few months old and wa one of the largest buildings in the city. The Santa Fe built th wooden depot in anticipation of increasingly larger volumes o freight traffic.

One of the railway workers unloading the oil train tha evening took a kerosine lamp into a boxcar for illumination The lamp ignited oil vapors. As the worker fled, the flame spread through the boxcar and leaped into the cavernou freighthouse. An alarm was sounded at 6:40 p.m., but for som unexplained reason it was never received by the fire department. Flames were rapidly propagating along the oil train an sweeping throughout the freighthouse when firefighters wer first alerted by shrieking locomotive whistles and hoots from large whistle atop the nearby electric power company plan The first apparatus did not arrive until 15 minutes after the fir started.

Firefighters discovered there was no nearby water. The began laying hose to distant hydrants. It was a time-consuming job and the first stream was not in operation until an hou after the fire erupted. By then the entire freighthouse, the o train and many freight and passenger cars on nearby track were either fully-involved or preheating to the point of ignition.

Flames soaring hundreds of feet and the glare which coul be seen throughout the city attracted some 15,000 spectator who rushed to the scene to find almost total pandemonium Locomotives—their engineers hooting whistles in frantic signals to switchmen—were pulling blazing boxcars away fror the engulfed depot.

Two policemen, Deputy Constable Alfredo Arguello and hi brother, Santiago, thought they saw a faster way to approac the fire and told the firefighters to pull their hose underneat freight cars. Loathe to accept orders, much less suggestion from non-firefighters, and no doubt frustrated and angry a still another example of how the city's antiquated alarm system and poor water supply largely contributed to a major fire, fight started between the officers and the firefighters. A firefighter knocked them down by directing a stream straight a them. As Alfredo got up, Strohm cursed him and punched th policeman in the face.

The new freight depot burned to the ground. Also destroye were 18 railroad cars: the entire oil train and six other boxcar loaded with freight for local merchants. Total losses were a least $200,000. It would be months before the Santa Fe's freigh service was fully in business again. And many more month before hard feelings between the firefighters and police fade into memory.

Five weeks later, water supply problems were again a mai contributing cause to another catastrophic fire which destroyed or damaged nine occupancies in a conflagration-breeding nest of wood-framed buildings along Los Angeles Street just south of First Street. At 15 minutes past midnight, Saturday, December 3, 1887, a fire, probably started by careles smoking, was discovered by a caretaker in a large haystack

Thomas Strohm served as chief engineer of the LAFD during three periods of the department's history. His first term started October 1, 1887 and ended January 25, 1888.

side the elite Club Stables, 50 Los Angeles Street.

Club Stables enjoyed a statewide reputation as the most shionable and best-appointed of their kind in Southern Caliornia. Catering to many of the city's leading citizens and ompanies, Club Stables boarded nearly 100 horses of both oroughbred stock and those used for drayage purposes by erchants and hotels. In addition to the tremendous quantity f hay, the fireload included dozens of buggies, carriages, stage oaches and wagons, together with harness equipment and ther tack.

Engines 1 and 2 quickly arrived as did Hook and Ladder 1. he nearby zanja was dry. When the engineers hooked their uction hoses to hydrants they found little water and feeble ressure. Again the firefighters had to look for a better supply s the flames worsened and passersby tried to tug terrified orses from the stables. Some broke away and dashed back nto the inferno. Others galloped north on Los Angeles Street hile leaving a trail of sparks from their burning blankets.

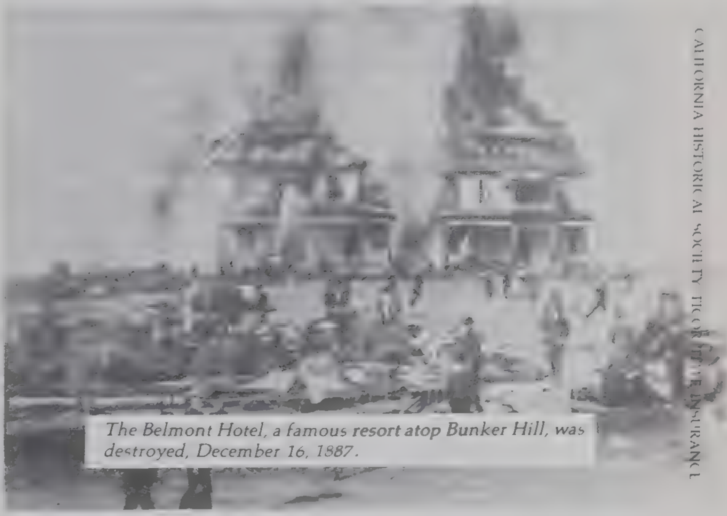
Ten minutes after arriving, firefighters got their first stream action. Flames now totally involved the stables. Radiant heat gnited the next-door Haben & Phillip galvanizing iron works t 52 Los Angeles Street. Like a chain of firecrackers, heat also gnited and destroyed Fruhling Brothers' blacksmithing shop t 54 Los Angeles Street and an adjacent pickle and vinegar lant. The fire's southerly spread was stopped by firefighters fter heat scorched the two-story frame house at 56 Los Aneles Street.

By 12:12, the last timber supporting the roof of the stables ollapsed and the firefighters so quickly surrounded and rought the fire under control that the ***Los Angeles Times*** ommended the LAFD: "The fire department turned out romptly. . . Chief Strohm was on hand and played a man's art. His cool judgement, quick insight and rapid work, as well s the ease with which he instilled these men, were in happy ontrast to the shameful lack of water. The work was intellently and well-done and in 10 minutes after the first stream ouched the front of the fire, the conflagration was under ontrol and the danger was over. . . The fire b'hoys did very handsomely."

The ***Times*** gleefully added a postscript to the fire by mentioning that "a drunken reporter" from a competing newspaper was "knocked silly" by H. "Brawny" McMahon of Hook and Ladder 1 when the newsman refused to get out of the firefighter's way as the laddermen helped to pull horses from the stable.

Total losses of around $200,000, approximately those of the Santa Fe freight depot disaster. In addition to the structural and contents losses, 90 horses perished. Among those who lost heavily was Tom Rowan, a founder of Thirty-Eights Engine No. 1. Rowan was, as firefighters recalled, no stranger to heavy losses by fire when his bakery burned in 1869. Rowan, who was to be elected mayor in 1892, lost three prize horses, four sets of harness, two buggies, one wagon and one carriage.

Strohm must have wondered whether his career as chief engineer was jinxed, when still another disastrous fire posed more severe problems less than two weeks later. At 10 o'clock Monday morning, December 16, 1887, fire broke out in the renowned Belmont Hotel, a famous resort atop Bunker Hill at the end of the Second Street cable car line.



The Belmont Hotel, a famous resort atop Bunker Hill, was destroyed, December 16, 1887.

CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, TICOR TITLE INSURANCE

The Belmont consisted of a pair of two-and-one-half story wood-frame buildings with sharply-peaked roofs. Only a few feet separated them. For years the panoramic view of Los Angeles had often provided amusement for the Belmont's guests and servants, who, when pistol shots reverberated or alarm bells tolled, watched fire apparatus and firefighters racing in opposite directions while searching for the blaze.

Perched almost alone atop Bunker Hill, the rapidly-spreading fire was quickly seen throughout the city. Pistol shots were fired. The police department received telephone calls. An officer pulled Box 31 at Spring and Second Streets. Engine and ladder company horses were unable to pull the heavy rigs up the hill. Firefighters had to take a longer route around Bunker Hill to reach the fire by way of Sixth and Pearl (Figueroa) Streets. The Belmont's inaccessibility took firefighters at least half an hour to get there.

Drawing water from the Second Street Park Reservoir, the steam engine finally got water on the fire, but the Belmont was, by then, beyond saving. Firefighters, servants and guests concentrated upon saving as many personal belongings and furniture as they could before heat and smoke drove them out of the buildings. Soon a sprawling pile of steamer trunks, clothing, bedding and furniture was strewn across the grassy slope looking down upon the city. Less than two hours later, the Belmont Hotel was gone forever and the $50,000 loss was added to the city's records.

Fire activity got off to a fast start in 1888 when the LAFD was confronted by the most stubborn blaze in the young department's history. Sometime around 11 a.m., January 3, workers on the top floor of the three-story brick Los Angeles Furniture Company on Main, immediately north of Temple Streets, upset a candle in the upholstery department. The fire quickly ignited fabrics and excelsior and spread to burlap-wrapped furniture stacked almost to the ceiling. Workers tried to douse the fire but it only worsened.

Police Officer Van Hulen, walking his beat on that rainy day, saw thick black smoke rolling from third floor windows of the factory. He ran to nearby Engine 2 and gave the alarm as factory employees telephoned the police department. At 11:10 the one-ton bell atop the First and Hill Streets drill tower began tolling the alarm.

When Hook and Ladder 1 arrived, firefighters cranked the Hayes' extension aerial and turntabled it to the third floor window while steam pumpers hooked up to hydrants. Lines were pulled up the ladder and firefighters attempted an interior attack, but were soon driven out of the building by the dense smoke and heat. Streams were repositioned from sidewalks and operated ineffectively until the fire eventually vented itself.

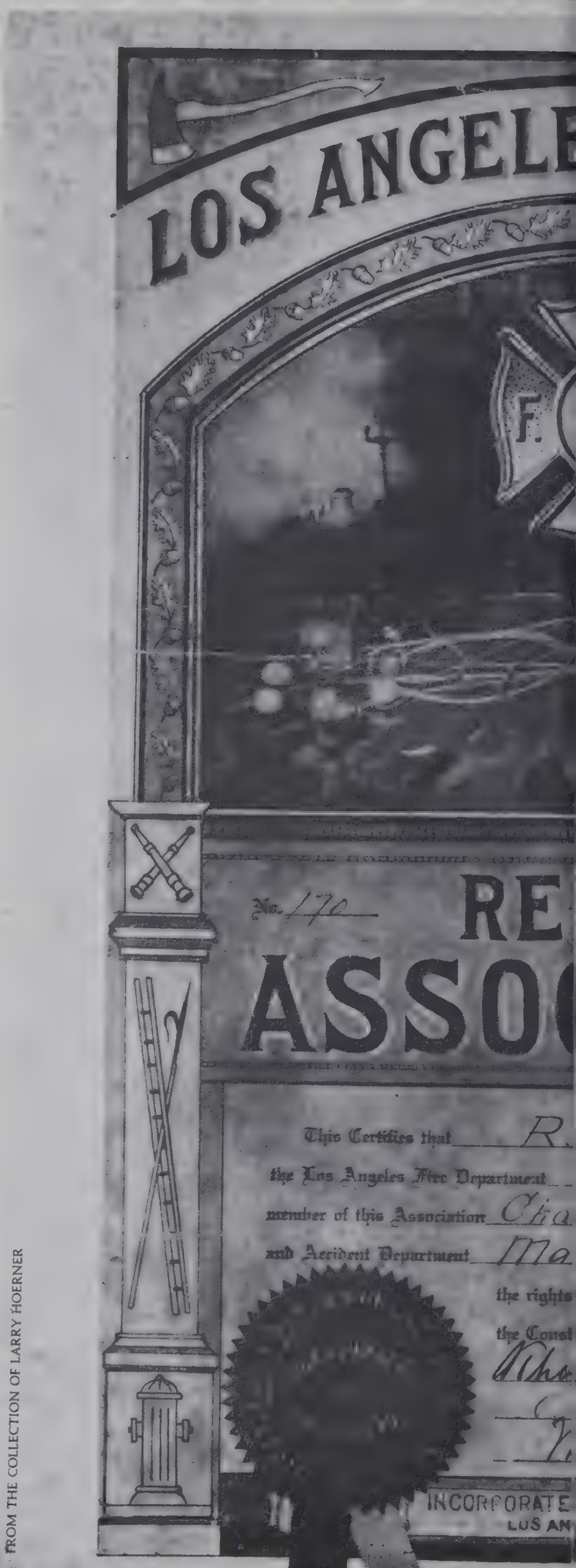
Despite the roof collapse, flames, mostly hidden in the thick smoke, continued to burn for hours among the tightly-packed furniture while defying firefighters' efforts to penetrate to the heart of the fire. With thousands of gallons of water cascading into the building and the firefighters almost constantly shrouded in smoke, runoff water flooded nearby shops. A firefighter on the roof narrowly escaped death when he fell into the flames. He clung to a timber roof support until two other firefighters pulled him out.

Despite the rainstorm, a huge throng hurried to the fire after hearing the tolling of the drill tower bell. Among them was Sackett Cornell, city editor of the ***Evening Telegram.*** The wind-driven rain, spray from the streams and smoke drove the crowd backward. As Cornell tried to stuff his notes into his pocket to prevent them from getting wet, his revolver fell to the sidewalk and discharged. The shot mortally wounded Joseph Lumazette, a carriage painter. Like most Angelenos in those days, Cornell carried a gun for self-protection. Personal journalism was, moreover, part-and-parcel of newspapering. It was not at all unusual for an offended reader to attack editors who, therefore, had all the more reason to carry guns. Cornell was quickly released on his own recognizance and charges were later dropped when the shooting was declared accidental.

The furniture fire resisted all efforts to control it. Although firefighters confined it to the third floor and roof, smoke and flames continued to spout for nearly six hours until nightfall when Strohm declared the fire was under control. Fire and water losses were tallied at $150,000. Three weeks later, Strohm announced his intention to resign, well before he was due for council consideration to serve another term as chief engineer. Explanations are cloudy. There was, however, a growing quarrel between political factions supporting Strohm and those favoring Assistant Chief Dan A. Moriarty. The quarrel spilled over into the newspapers, especially the ***Evening Express,*** whose news accounts of major fires featured Moriarty, but made no mention that Strohm commanded them. Strohm, in turn, took to the ***Times*** to tell his side of the story.

After much council debate, during which Strohm and Moriarty were tied in early balloting, 7-7, Moriarty was voted in as the new chief engineer, effective January 26, 1888. Moriarty had served as assistant chief during the two years the LAFD was in service and earlier was a volunteer firefighter. Prior to coming to California, Moriarty also served as a volunteer in the Omaha, Nebraska; Virginia City, Nevada; and Tombstone, Arizona, Fire Departments.

The LAFD grew and improved under Moriarty who carried



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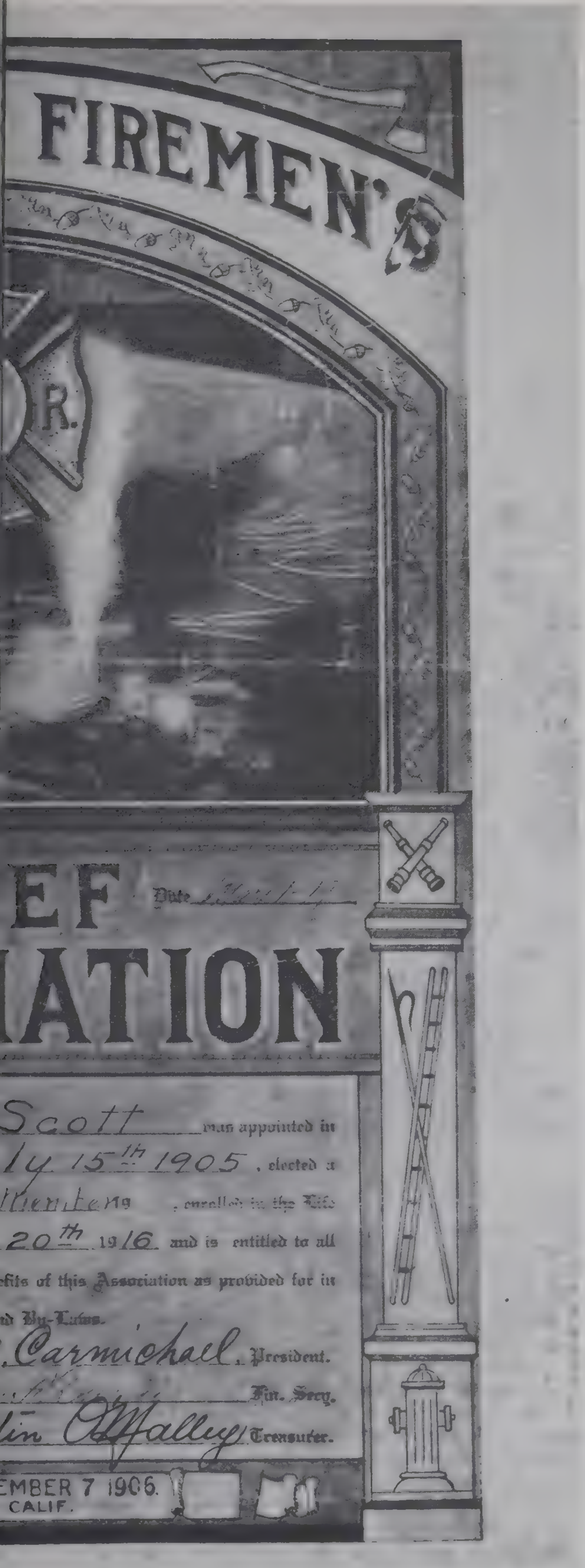
FROM THE COLLECTION OF LARRY HOERNER



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forward programs started or encouraged by his predecessors, including Strohm and Moore. During Moriarty's first month in office, the city's two volunteer fire companies, East Los Angeles Hose and Morris Vineyard Hose, were absorbed into the department. Starting on March 1, 1888, the department began taking delivery, or purchasing, additional apparatus, including three more Ahrens pumpers and three hose carts.

By year's end, the LAFD fleet would include seven engines, one hook and ladder, two four-wheeled hose carriages, six two-wheeled hose carts, 8000 feet of hose, eight stations and 25 horses. The full time paid roster of 87 firefighters was more than double the manpower with which the department started. And that did not include the 66-member reserve call force. Total LAFD expenditures for the year came to $55,002.05; nearly half of which represented new apparatus and hose.

The water and alarm systems were similarly improved. More hydrants were installed, especially in the hilly areas; largely as a result of the Belmont Hotel experience and fire problems in the rapidly-growing Wilshire subdivision to the west. At the end of 1888, total hydrants grew from 164 to 246. Moriarty also reported there were now 35 fire alarm boxes in the city. The tower bell was connected to gongs in four engine houses, the hook and ladder company and in Moriarty's home. Three stations had no fire alarm, but all were hooked into the city's telephone system. The only blunderbuss remaining in the department indicates the era of gunfire to sound alarms was waning. The LAFD would answer 163 alarms in 1888: 112 of them sounded from the drill tower bell, 45 by telephone, three of them false and three after being reported directly to a fire station. Total fire loss for the year would come to $300,000; much of it from one fire which was to have an everlasting effect upon past, present and future firefighters and their families.

Thursday night April 19, 1888, got off to a busy start for firefighters when the Hill Street tower bell called them to a 6:30 alarm from near the Santa Fe depot. Arriving, they found a large boarding house and a cottage near the railway roundhouse were beyond saving. The battle left firefighters exhausted as they returned to their stations for roll call and the additionally tiring work of readying the apparatus for the next alarm, cleaning and replacing hose, walking the horses until they calmed sufficiently to be led to their stalls where they were wiped down, currycombed, fed and watered.

Firefighters were hopefully settling down for the night when the drill tower bell again began tolling shortly before 9 p.m. As the engines and ladder company pulled from their stations and were followed by the hose companies, the glow off to the east strongly suggested the fire was at the Southern Pacific freight depot on San Fernando near Railroad Streets.

Clinging to their rigs as the galloping horses pulled the rigs clattering along the streets, the firefighters saw the huge, one-story brick depot was not burning. Yet. Flames were billowing from the sprawling one-story warehouse of Whittier, Fuller & Company, suppliers of painters' materials, oils, wood doors and window frames as well as other flammables. The Southern Pacific freighthouse, itself packed with freight awaiting delivery to city merchants, stood only a few feet across the tracks and was almost certainly doomed by radiant heat.

Six streams were operating by the time Moriarty arrived to take command. By then the Whittier warehouse roof had fallen in. He ordered additional streams to set up a better water curtain in a desperate, but seemingly hopeless, attempt to prevent heat from igniting the railroad depot. Firefighters saw three huge tanks inside the warehouse. Two contained flammable liquids; the third held lard. Despite the imminent probability of tank explosions, Moriarty and the firefighters moved in as close as heat allowed to bore into the flames with the streams.

Dan A. Moriarty was chief engineer of the LAFD twice. He was first named chief on January 26, 1888.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF LARRY HOERNER

Moriarty ordered firefighters arriving on the fourth or general, city-wide alarm, which also called out the reserve firefighting force, to lay more water curtain stream patterns between the warehouse and the Southern Pacific depot, while other lines were stretched to surround the engulfed Whittier warehouse. The deep-tone clanging of the Hill Street tower bell continued to repeat the general alarm and the glare silhouetting the railroad yards and surrounding buildings alerted the entire city.

Thousands of people hurried to the scene to watch one of the most spectacular fires in the city's history up to that time as solid sheets of flame stabbed high into the sky. The crowd awaiting the imminent ignition of the depot was oblivious to the probability of deadly explosions. Police crowd control was notably lacking; a fact not overlooked by newspapers or firefighters, who no doubt wondered if the scarcity of police officers had any connection with the brawl between them and firefighters during the Santa Fe depot fire.

Moriarty and the firefighters, realizing that if the tanks exploded, the entire neighborhood might become involved, moved their lines closer and took a fearsome beating from the heat. Suddenly, a dull rumbling sound was heard over the roar of the flames as one of the tanks exploded. Burning oil flowed from the warehouse and ran down street gutters which were quickly dammed and the flames snuffed by firefighters.

At 9:30, a second tank containing around 60,000 gallons of gasoline exploded with a poofing roar as the tank rocketed from the warehouse and crashed down 150 feet away. The tremendous force of the explosion blew out the rear wall, the front doors and a portion of the front wall. Flames hissed from every window and opening. An even greater fireball boiling from the warehouse touched off a stampede as an estimated 8000 spectators trampled men, women and children as they fled past telephone poles which blazed 200 feet away from th fire.

Still the firefighters held their ground as they played stream on the Southern Pacific warehouse which was now in eve worse peril after the explosion flattened the warehouse wall on the depot's side. With still more streams surrounding th warehouse, the lard tank ignited and burned fiercely. Gradually, the firefighters got a handle on the warehouse fire as it ra out of fuel. The $60,000 loss was one of the city's worst of th year. But the Southern Pacific Depot, albeit smoke-smudged still stood completely intact.

The firefighters received many plaudits for their courageou stand which saved the depot. Said the ***Los Angeles Times:*** "Th fire-laddies under their chief, are deserving of praise for thei efforts to control—in this case—the uncontrollable. Had it no been for their so quickly stopping the flaming oil as it issue in a seething state from the warehouse, there is no telling th damage to property that might have resulted." The reserv firefighters were cited, too, and the 39 callmen who answere the alarm were voted a $90 bonus to be divided among them

On May 5, less than a month later, Moriarty received a lette of gratitude from Superintendent Eldridge E. Hewitt of th Southern Pacific's Los Angeles division. Enclosed was a chec for $1000. Fire commissioners voted to deposit the check int the relief fund account which at that time was only $127.26 largely from fines collected from errant firefighters. The fund at first administered by a citizens' board of trustees, was soo transferred to the control of the fire commissioners. It wa deposited in the Los Angeles First National Bank under th name, Fireman's Relief Fund.

Commissioners had cause to almost immediately begin utilizing the money for four cases of need. The first disbursements were for four months of medical care and the burial o Firefighter Joseph Breson; care for Firefighter Charles Mahoney, injured by the premature discharge of a pistol durin an East Los Angeles fire; Firefighter J. E. Johnson, who suffered an arm injury at a fire in the Masonic Hall and fo Engineer J. Hughes, whose collarbone was broken at a fire Moriarty, himself, was to become an early beneficiary of th relief fund. While responding to a September 12, 1891, alarm he was thrown from his buggy and suffered a left ankle injury which necessitated the amputation of his foot. The Fireman' Relief Fund paid all of his medical expenses: $75. Moriarty returned to duty.

The seed money provided by the Southern Pacific Railroad together with other donations from grateful citizens, profit from benefit dances, concerts and baseball games, led to the creation of the Los Angeles Firemen's Relief Association formed for the everlasting benefit of firefighters and thei families when they most needed a helping hand. The association's articles of incorporation were drawn by firefighter meeting in Engine 3's firehouse on December 3, 1906. A stat charter was quickly granted and the association held its first meeting, December 29, 1906, with representatives from 19 fire companies.

The fire commissioners on January 16, 1889, recognized that the increasingly formalized structure of the LAFD required geographical definitions of first alarm districts and for appropriate response procedures outside those districts. Obviously, the tolling of the Hill Street bell could not be allowed to result in all of the city's apparatus responding to each alarm. Los Angeles had long been divided into fire districts which, as the city grew, became larger. Company response boundary lines were not always observed, especially when firehouse lookouts saw fires outside their districts or heard the Hill tower bell tolling. For years, established procedure called for companies to stop at the edge of their first alarm district and wait 10 inutes for the possibility of a call for their help. After hear- g no more alarm bells, pistol shots or seeing smoke, the efighters then returned to their stations. The fire commis- on delineated first alarm districts and appropriate responses itside those districts in a systematic manner.

During this era, a game of musical chairs for chief engineers arted and resulted in a system lasting more than 15 years hen relatively greater stability was instilled in the chief engi- eer's office. On January 25, 1888, council support for Mor- rty was such that Strohm was voted out of office and Mor- rty once again became chief. It is clear during this period that e chief engineers, outstanding as all of them were in the erformance of their official duties, were unfortunately at the ercy of whatever political administration or clique held sway.

CHRONOLOGY OF CHIEF ENGINEERS FROM 1889 to 1905

Thomas Strohm .... *Appointed March 22, 1889*
Served from March 22, 1889 to January 31, 1891

Michael Curran .... *Appointed January 18, 1893*
Served from February 1, 1893 to November 30, 1893

Dan A. Moriarty ...... *Appointed November 22, 1893*
Served from December 1, 1893 to January 31, 1895

Walter S. Moore .... *Appointed January 16, 1895*
Served from February 1, 1895 to March 31, 1900

Thomas Strohm .... *Appointed March 28, 1900*
Served from April 1, 1900 to February 28, 1905

This shortcoming was recognized, if not solved, as early as 388 when the council appointed a non-partisan citizens com- iittee of 14 members to draft a new city charter. Indicative of ie power the volunteers still held was the fact that seven iembers were former volunteer firefighters, including Moore, ho was named committee secretary. Notable changes in what ras to become known as the Los Angeles City Charter of 1889 vhich replaced Ordinance 205 creating the LAFD) included etter specification of the chief engineer's duties and expan- on of the fire commission from three to five members.

No longer did the council elect the chief engineer. Under the 389 Charter, that responsibility became the fire commission's. he new board consisted entirely of former volunteers. Of opefully greater significance, as far as the firefighters were oncerned, was the creation of civil service methods, including rocedures for selecting personnel. All this looked good on aper. In practical application, the cure was in many ways orse than the problems it intended to solve, as the chronolo- y shows. The board, moreover, was selected by the mayor and ouncil, thus perpetuating the old system, but with a new layer f political influence added.

The first hint that firefighters were not as well-protected nder civil service occurred soon after the 1889 Charter became w as the LAFD was confronted with its first major disciplin- ry problem. At 10:30 on the night of April 16, 1889, fire was iscovered in the ***Los Angeles Tribune*** newspaper located in ie basement under the Fountain Saloon at 20-22 North Spring treet. A bartender telephoned the alarm.

Hose Company No. 1, still better-known as Park Hose Company, as it was in its volunteer days, was among the companies answering the alarm. Park Hose had never been high on the volunteers' political pecking order. Most of the Volunteer Fire Department's influence stemmed from Original 38's Engine 1 at the Old Plaza Station and Confidence Engine 2 nearby.

It was a nasty, hot and smoky fire which forced Park Hose and other firefighters to drag four long hoselines into the store, snake them down a stairway and along a 30-foot unventilated tunnel to reach the fire at the far end of the basement. Thick smoke and heat forced the firefighters to back out. They momentarily gulped in fresh air before digging in again. This time they were successful after chopping holes through the saloon floor and operating their streams through them until the basement was foot-deep in water. The stubborn fire was knocked down in only 15 minutes with relatively minor losses of around $9000. All accounts indicate it was a job well done.

Eight days later, however, Strohm reported to the fire commission that he had suspended all members of Park Hose for their conduct at the fire. His action, unanimously sustained by the commission, was due to the "following reasons," according to the minutes. Mysteriously, the minutes then go blank and provide no explanation for the affair. The only further mention of the suspension are instructions to Strohm to hire new firefighters before the next weekly commission meeting.

That accounts of the fire provide no clues to any misbehavior on the part of Park Hose only adds mystery because newspapers in that era were frequently given to critiquing fires and the behavior of firefighters. Every newspaper account favorably reports the fire and the quick stop the firefighters—including Park Hose—made despite extremely difficult problems. In reporting Park Hose's suspension, the ***Los Angeles Times*** said, "The members, it is said, were suspended for gross misconduct and violation of department rules... The members, it is said, were guilty of rowdyism of the worst kind, breaking over the firelines, etc." Other accounts suggest that Park Hose firefighters were only guilty of political allegiances alien to the political administration. Whatever the case, the firefighters had no right of appeal and the suspensions stuck. New men were appointed and Park Hose was reinstated.

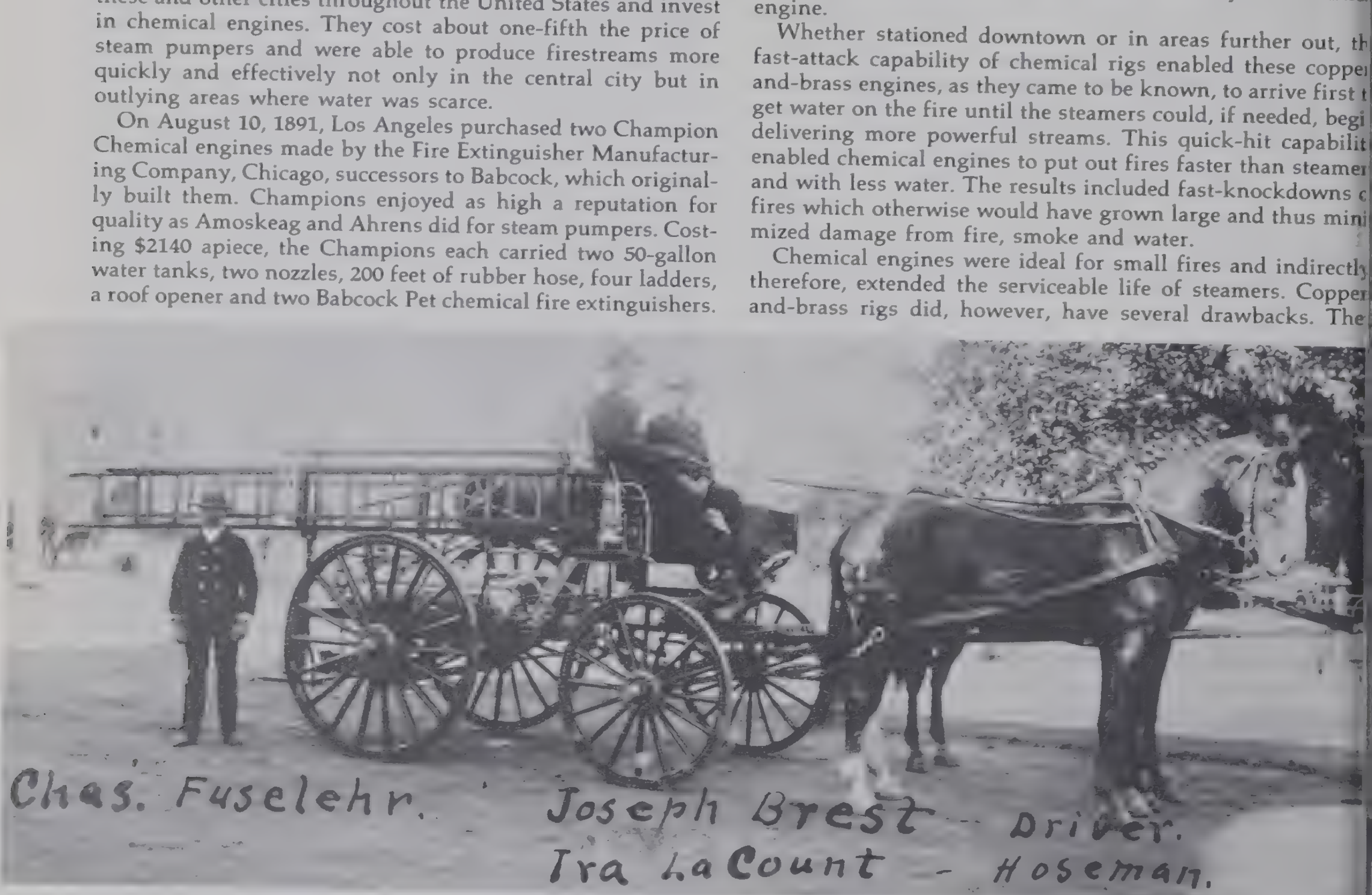
FROM THE COLLECTION OF LARRY HOERNER

Colorful history of Park Hose Company No. 1 was marred by the suspension of all members of the company by Chief Engineer Thomas Strohm following apparent misconduct during a North Spring Street basement fire in the Los Angeles Tribune *on April 16, 1889. Details of the LAFD's first major disciplinary action were mysteriously omitted from minutes of the fire commission. The reorganized company is shown during an 1896 Los Angeles Fiesta Parade when it won first prize for the best-decorated hose wagon.*

Los Angeles' continuing rapid growth was, meanwhile, outpacing its fire protection; notably with the subdivision of the Boyle Heights area, starting around 1890. While large fires were fortunately few, officials recognized the city's luck would inevitably run out. Recognizing the need, they were faced with a dilemma: How could the city afford the astronomical cost of a fleet of new steamers as well as improvements and extensions of the fire alarm system, water mains and hydrants? Commissioners in 1891 sent Moore to visit San Francisco and San Diego to study how those cities were coping with their fire problems.

While not a panacea, Moore reported that the ideal approach under Los Angeles' circumstances, was to follow the lead of these and other cities throughout the United States and invest in chemical engines. They cost about one-fifth the price of steam pumpers and were able to produce firestreams more quickly and effectively not only in the central city but in outlying areas where water was scarce.

On August 10, 1891, Los Angeles purchased two Champion Chemical engines made by the Fire Extinguisher Manufacturing Company, Chicago, successors to Babcock, which originally built them. Champions enjoyed as high a reputation for quality as Amoskeag and Ahrens did for steam pumpers. Costing $2140 apiece, the Champions each carried two 50-gallon water tanks, two nozzles, 200 feet of rubber hose, four ladders, a roof opener and two Babcock Pet chemical fire extinguishers. Chemical Engine Company No. 1 was put in service at the Old Plaza Fire Station and Chemical 2 was housed in a rented station built in 1892 on Belmont (Loma) Street between First and Second Streets. The two engines proved so successful in operation that three more were quickly ordered along with hose wagons which ran with them as two-piece companies and were designated combination chemical and hose rigs.


Chas. Fuselehr.
Joseph Brest - Driver.
Ira LaCount - Hoseman.

In 1891, the LAFD purchased its first two chemical engines known as Champions and built by the Fire Extinguisher Manufacturing Company. The engines were so successful that more were ordered. The first chemical outfits cost $2140 apiece.

Because of Los Angeles' peculiar fire problems, perhaps no other city made better use of these engines. Chemical companies carried twin tanks of water, along with bicarbonate of soda and sulphuric acid. When the acid was injected into each tank and agitated with paddles or similar systems, the resulting pressure forced water through the rig's one-and-one-quarter-inch hose. As the first tank ran out, the second was mixed with acid to produce a continuous stream. When required, both tanks could simultaneously produce two streams. A chemic engine, with its twin 50-gallon tanks, could produce 100 ga lons of extinguishing agent.

Still another advantage was their light weight. Chemic engines required only two horses to pull them, rather than th three needed for heavy steamers. In addition to that cos saving, the light weight was significant in Los Angeles with i many hills which, as the Belmont Hotel fire had shown, we difficult for horses to climb while pulling heavy steamers. I outlying districts, chemical rigs could cover more areas an faster, too, while providing an answer to the water problem Rare was the fire in those suburban sections that require more extinguishing agent than that carried by one chemic engine.

Whether stationed downtown or in areas further out, th fast-attack capability of chemical rigs enabled these coppe and-brass engines, as they came to be known, to arrive first t get water on the fire until the steamers could, if needed, begi delivering more powerful streams. This quick-hit capabilit enabled chemical engines to put out fires faster than steame and with less water. The results included fast-knockdowns c fires which otherwise would have grown large and thus mini mized damage from fire, smoke and water.

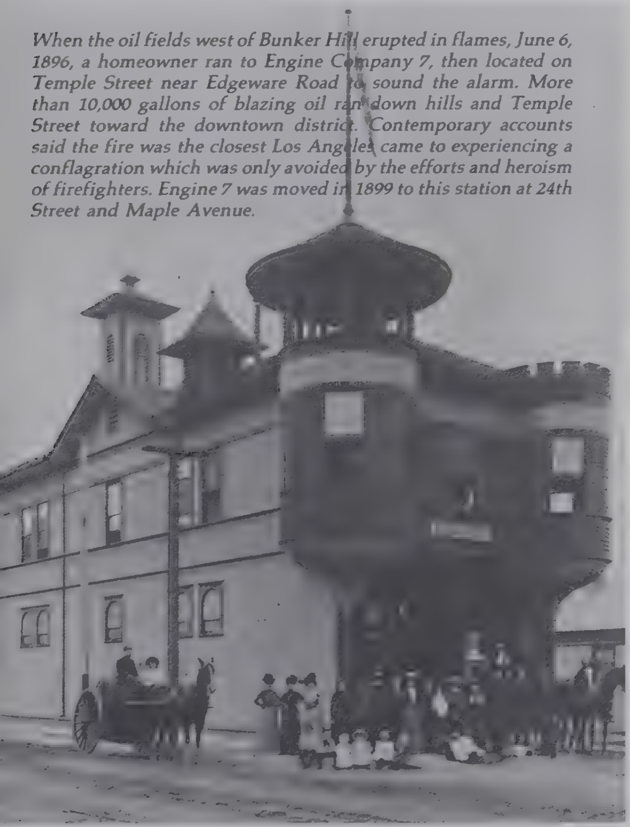
Chemical engines were ideal for small fires and indirectly therefore, extended the serviceable life of steamers. Copper and-brass rigs did, however, have several drawbacks. The were difficult to clean and maintain. Because they could get to small fires quicker and put them out faster, they became the busiest companies in the city. Many firefighters disliked assignment to them because the rigs' upkeep and their frequent runs to trifling fires often meant little sleep at night. When they returned from these alarms, there were the chores of preparing the chemical engine for the next run and walking and wiping down the horses.

These companies nevertheless prided themselves upon their response speed and quick fire attack. The department's fastest horses were usually assigned to chemical engines. Chemical 4's firefighters practiced hitching up their horses until they got their time down to 17 seconds from their previous 34-second best time. Before chemical engines were phased out when booster tanks containing water were mounted on fire engines, LAFD had 24 of them in their fleet; about the same number steam engines. Indicative of their value is a 1909 report wing that chemical companies doused 181 fires that year steam pumpers only 68.

ven with the LAFD's fast-attack capability, there was no pping a bizarre fire in 1896 which contemporary accounts came close to destroying the entire city, except for the oic work of firefighters. Los Angeles was in the midst of an boom after Edward J. Doheny prospected for it around what ow Second Street and Glendale Boulevard. While drilling in 2, he discovered natural gas only seven feet below ground a vast pool of oil at the 162-foot level.

Vithin four years there were more than 600 wooden oil mping derricks alongside drilling gear, storage tanks and use oil pooled in large open sumps in citizens' backyards st of Bunker Hill as Los Angeles became the oil capital of the st. The smell was awesome. The profits were, too. Oil was ling for $1.15 a barrel at the wellhead on Saturday, June 6, 6. Early that evening, A. P. Miller's two small sons built a nfire near the family's backyard derrick, storage tank and mp on Metcalf (Bixel) Street between First and Second eets. The fire ignited dry grass and made a run toward the mp as Miller and his neighbor Ralph Tucker, tried to beat it t. Flames spreading from the sump ignited a 500-gallon rage tank and quickly engulfed Miller's house.

Tucker ran to the nearby Engine 7 station on Temple Street ar the Cable Car powerhouse (now Edgeware Road) and rned in the alarm at 9 p.m. By then, wind flurries were attering fire in all directions. Engine 7 merely pulled out of arters, took suction at the corner hydrant and began pumpg, as more apparatus answered the alarm. It was slow-going r the horses as they strained at their harnesses while hauling e steamers up the hill.



When the oil fields west of Bunker Hill erupted in flames, June 6, 1896, a homeowner ran to Engine Company 7, then located on Temple Street near Edgeware Road to sound the alarm. More than 10,000 gallons of blazing oil ran down hills and Temple Street toward the downtown district. Contemporary accounts said the fire was the closest Los Angeles came to experiencing a conflagration which was only avoided by the efforts and heroism of firefighters. Engine 7 was moved in 1899 to this station at 24th Street and Maple Avenue.

Chief Engineer Moore, realizing the entire oil field was in danger, called for a general alarm as soon as he arrived. As engines took up battle positions, more houses, derricks, sheds, sumps and tanks—some of them holding as much as 1000 barrels of oil—quickly ignited. More than 10,000 gallons of blazing oil spilling from the tanks ran down hills and Temple Street toward the downtown district.

Derricks spouting towering flames crumbled one by one in torrents of sparks which set more fires. Moore's sizeup of the situation told him his only strategy was to surround the fire. He directed firefighters to set up a perimeter bounded by Temple, Court, Figueroa Streets and the Cable Car powerhouse. The awesome glare from the hills to the west alarmed the entire city. Thousands of people hurried to watch as the cry, "The oil wells are burning!" echoed throughout Los Angeles. Horse-drawn streetcars stalled from the weight of riders crammed inside. By wagons, buggies, bicycles and on foot, still more spectators hurried up the hills. They were seemingly oblivious to their peril as blazing oil ran down the slopes and adjacent streets while the gutters along Temple Street flamed brilliantly.

Park Hose laid still more hoselines to supply companies forming the battle line while Chemical Engines 1 and 2 darted to attack hot spots that threatened to extend the fire even further. "It was a time of reckless heroism and hairbreadth escapes," said the ***Los Angeles Times*** of firefighters' efforts. "A shout of admiration went up at the splendid daring of Assistant Chief Edward R. Smith who, rushing close up to one of the blazing tanks, stood in oil to his knees as he sent the stream of water into the flaming mass from the hose he held. One spark would have ignited the oil about the brave fireman and burned him to a crisp before help could arrive. But the spark did not fall and the gallant officer will rush to the rescue of many another blazing building." In more modern times, Smith would have been, at the very least, severely reprimanded for his "splendid daring" while standing inside a pool of flammable liquid.

The ***Times*** further lauded Moore and the firefighters: "But for the skill and heroism of the brave men whose lives are spent in fighting the fire fiend, last night's wild work might have left only heaps of smoking ruins to show where the city of Los Angeles once stood. It was only by the hardest battling that the fire, which broke out in the heart of the oil region, was confined within the basin which now holds only black ashes instead of tall derricks and well-filled tanks," Losses, exceeding $25,000 included 13 derricks, 15 tanks, five houses and 6000 barrels of oil. The fire was the city's worst of the year.

Moore, in his 1896 report, realizing that even worse perils faced the fast-sprawling city, recommended the purchase of three new steamers for the downtown and surrounding areas, an additional hook and ladder, three chemical engines for outlying residential districts and a water tower apparatus which could raise a powerful stream to fight fires in upper floors of central city buildings which were steadily being built taller.

Moore also urged a completely paid department which would eliminate callmen. That would not occur for more than half a century. With the expansion of the city to Venice, the annexation of the harbor area, the addition of the San Fernando Valley, which itself nearly doubled the geographical size of the city, the department would not become fully-paid until 1952 with the closure of the Rodger Young station, manned by volunteers in Griffith Park. Col. J. Griffith donated the more than 3000-acre park as a Christmas present to the city the same year Moore was calling for a fully-paid department.

While the LAFD would wait many years before it got its first water tower apparatus, the department took delivery in 1897 of its first 85-foot aerial ladder. Made by the Babcock subsidiary of the Fire Extinguisher Manufacturing Company, the rig was stationed in the department's new $10,000 show case Fire Station 8 which had opened July 7, 1896, at 346-348 South Hill Street. The station was at that time perhaps the finest on the Pacific Coast. Among its amenities were mobile horse stalls which swung clear of the horses and rigs as the companies turned out to alarms.

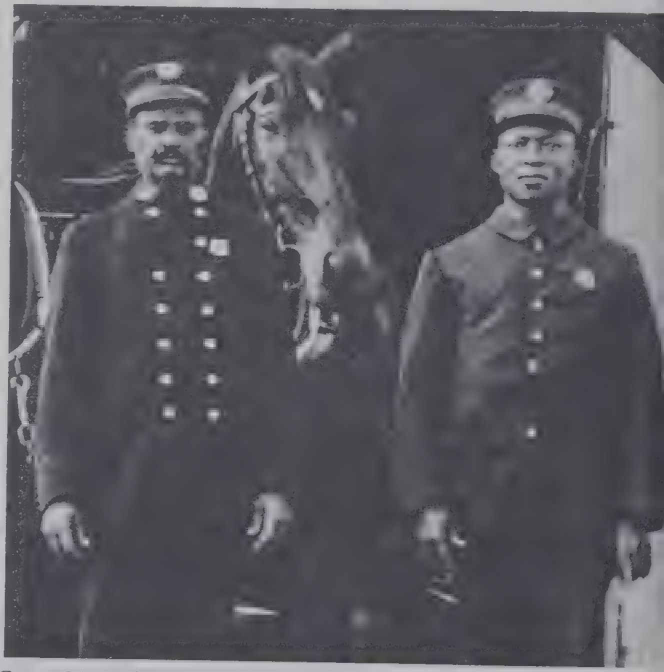
The Hill Street station was the LAFD's first "Big House", because it consolidated companies and served as headquarters. In addition to the new ladder company (officially known as Truck B, while the Hayes ladder was designated Truck A) Chemical Engine 1 was relocated in the station, along with Engine 8 from its old firehouse at 114 West Third Street. The new location for Chemical 1 was one of the reasons why the Old Plaza Station was closed. The consolidated Hill Street station provided excellent coverage for the area. The city, moreover, could thus save $100 monthly rent paid to the owners of the Old Plaza property. Vacated on October 1, 1897, after 13 years of service, the firehouse was converted into a host of uses, including a restaurant, a Chinese lottery and gambling hall, a cigar store, a warehouse, a saloon and a cheap hotel with hourly rates and no-questions-asked of the marital status of its guests.

As the building steadily deteriorated, its alarm bell cupola was damaged by fire. In 1952, buildings and land in the Old Plaza were acquired by the State of California and made part of the El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historic Park Development. Capt. Robert Foster, appointed in 1959 as the LAFD's first historian, researched and identified the LAFD's first fire station. With the help of members of the Box 15 Club, a group of area fire buffs and other interested groups, the firehouse was restored. Ceremoniously reopened, October 1, 1960, the Old Plaza Fire Station was dedicated as California Historical Landmark No. 730. The Old Plaza Firehouse, with its apparatus representative of a bygone era and other fire memorabilia became one of the central city's tourist attractions.

LAFD PHOTO

The Old Plaza Firehouse was restored and reopened, October 1, 1960, and dedicated as California Historical Landmark No. 730. The building houses a museum of apparatus and memorabilia.

On October 2, 1897, the LAFD hired its first black firefighte when the fire commission appointed George W. Bright as callman. Less than a month later he was upgraded to th position of full-time, paid hoseman. Promoted to driver thre years later, Bright went on to become a lieutenant on August 1902. He was the LAFD's first black officer. Before the commission would certify his lieutenancy, he was asked for something never required of any previous officer of the departmen Bright was ordered to produce an endorsement letter from th minister and congregation of the Second Baptist Church, which he was a member.



George W. Bright (left) was the first black firefighter hired by the LAFD on October 2, 1897. Edward Bowan, Jr., (right) joined the department on January 26, 1905. Bright also was the first black to earn promotion to a higher rank when he was appointed as a lieutenant on August 1, 1902.

Bright, who remained a lieutenant until he retired on a disability pension, April 17, 1917, was only permitted to command other blacks and hispanics who were, by then, joining the department. Bright was assigned to Chemical Hose Company No. 4 at 129 South Belmont (Loma Drive) Street and transfers of blacks and hispanics were made to fill out the station's complement. Ultimately, the company moved in 1924 to Fire Station 14 at 3401 South Central Avenue. With increasing numbers of blacks coming on the job, a second all-minority station was opened at 1401 South Central Avenue in 1936. And thus were sewn the seeds for a complex situation which resulted in severe problems half a century later for the LAFD and caused the retirement of a chief engineer. Those problems were not resolved until full integration of the department as blacks were assigned to companies throughout the city. Although civil service did not become a city department until 1903, the fire commission, of December 15, 1897, amended the LAFD's rules and regulations with this formal policy statement:

"As an incentive to good service and discipline, and as an important factor in increasing the efficiency of the fire department through the selection and retention of those best qualified to fill the positions, all callmen and others new to the service shall be selected by competitive lists as to fitness, physically, intellectually and morally under regulations adopted by the board... All promotions shall be made in order from the next lower grade or grades of the existing force, based on competitive lists showing past efficiency, personal character

The LAFD's first black firefighters were assigned to Chemical Company No. 4 at 129 South Belmont Street (Loma Drive). Station was built in 1892 and housed Chemical Company No. 1 when it was relocated from the Old Plaza Firehouse.

nd ability and knowledge in line of duty, and no removals hall be made except for cause on written charges preferred to nd sustained by the Board of Fire Commissioners." Only the hief engineer and assistant chief engineer were exempted rom this rule.

As the LAFD anticipated the imminence of the twentieth entury and its attendant fire problems, Moore worked hard or public support of a bond issue to make improvements the lepartment had been requesting for a dozen years. The electorte's approval of the 1898 Bonds Issue proposition marked the tart of the LAFD's first successful building campaign. Moore's goal was to add 12 new city-owned fire stations. High and costs thwarted him and only six were built.

The LAFD closed out the century with two of the city's worst ndustrial fires up to that time. In mid-afternoon, December 7, 898, Art Stevens was filling a petroleum delivery wagon with enzene inside the Standard Oil refinery, warehouse, tank arm and stables. The complex was boundaried by San Fernando, Aurora and Olympia Streets with the Southern Pacific freight yards to the east. The area today is southwest of the intersection of North Spring and North Broadway Streets. While accounts of the fire's cause differ, Moore's official report says somebody "throwing away a cigar stump" ignited vapors around the wagon and benzene tank. The flashing fire panicked the horses which bolted from the refinery with the blazing tank wagon careening behind them. The wagon soon overturned and separated from the horses who were last seen galloping north on San Fernando.

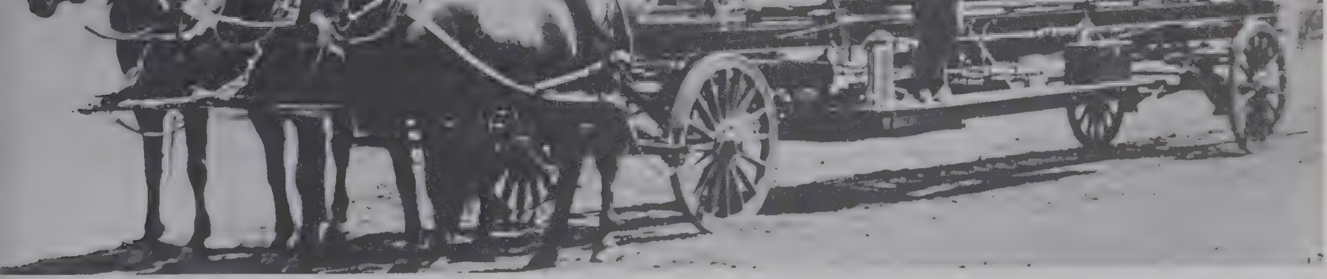
By now the wide open valve on the benzene tank was spouting fuel into an ever-widening pool of flames. Standard Oil's manager, E. S. Sullivan, saw the fire and immediately closed the fireproof metal doors of the large brick warehouse containing thousands of cans of petroleum products. He ran outside and at 2:50 p.m., turned the key in Box 212 at the corner of San Fernando and Aurora Streets.

First-due Engine Company No. 1 saw the column of ugly thick black smoke as the horses turned out of the station at Avenue 19 and Pasadena Avenue. The fire worsened as the horses and steamer and the hose reel following close behind clanged and clattered along the cobblestoned streets. Thin, gray smoke trailed from the steamer's boiler stack as water-pumping pressure built. There was only one hydrant in the area. Engine 1 immediately took it while hosemen unreeled their lines.

Engine 3, housed at 410-412 North Main Street, arrived soon after. The next nearest hydrant was around 2000 feet—two city blocks—away. The hosemen, assisted by the Hayes aerial company and a chemical engine crew, began laying the long line as Assistant Chief Smith arrived. Close behind came Strohm who had seen the loomup from headquarters and headed in that direction without waiting for a second alarm.

Strohm did not have to tell Smith what needed to be done. The question was how to do it. Using his arms to protect his face from blistering in the intense heat, Smith managed to get to Box 212 and send in the second alarm which brought Engine 8, Engine 6, Babcock Hook and Ladder Company B and another chemical engine.

Strohm had an inherent skill for fireground management of the type which would be practiced some 100 years later. Many chiefs would have concentrated their initial attack on the worst of the flames. Latter-day water additives for fighting flammable liquid fires were as yet unknown. Strohm wrote off the worst-involved area and formed companies in a perimeter around the refinery while directing streams to protect nearby exposures including the Cudahy Meat Packing Company and



LAFD PHOTO

In 1897, the LAFD took delivery of its first 85-foot aerial ladder made by the Babcock subsidiary of the Fire Extinguisher Manufacturing Company.

Early LAFD firefighters were hired and reported directly to their assigned fire stations. Training facilities, a traditional hallmark explaining the department's excellence, came later.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF BILL DAHLQUIST

the Brooks Fruit Packing Company. Residents of hundreds of wood-frame and wood-shingled roof cottages in the area beyond hurriedly packed their belongings and fled. Hundreds more went to nearby saloons in the area known as Dogtown and quaffed schooners of beer at a nickel apiece.

Considering the tremendous body of fire, the awesome clouds of thick, black smoke melding into each other as they rolled hundreds of feet, while tank after tank of flammables ignited, many a chief would have panicked and called for a general alarm. Strohm, in his cool assessment of the problem, saw that containment and letting the fire burn itself out was his best strategy.

Nor did he let still more problems alter his game plan. Three carloads of hay consigned to Standard Oil's stables ignited and freely blazed on the nearby SP tracks. Strohm was also aware that two wooden tank cars of oil nearby would burn themselves out, too. And then Strohm took extraordinary action. Realizing that water was scarce, that exposures were protected and that it was going to be a long battle to continue to contain the fire, Strohm ordered Engine 6 to leave its hose and return to its 114 West Ninth Street station. There, Engine 6 would load more hose and stand ready to answer other alarms in the rest of the city which stood relatively unprotected against another fire. The canny chief engineer knew that Murphy's Law often prevails and that more fires can and often do occur while a major one is being fought.

Sizing up his refinery problem, Strohm saw there was little hope of saving all 20 of the tanks, but the firefighters could try to cool and save as many of them as they could. Firefighters braved the heat and smoke to shut off valves feeding the tanks. Obtaining bags of bran from the stables, they packed it around the bases of the tanks, covered the bran with horse blankets and shoveled dirt to form a solid packing in the hope of preventing the blazing floodtide of oil from eating into the tank bottoms.

With the poor water supply, the best Strohm could mount on the refinery containment were four pumper streams: one on each side. As Chemical Engines 5 and 2 exhausted their extinguishing agent these companies hurried off to find more wat and returned to resume attacks where most needed and to after any vicinity fires. The fireproof doors of the one-stor brick warehouse melted from the heat and the gasoline a kerosine cans inside soon added fuel to the billowing flame

Strohm conceded the warehouse to the flames, but directed fierce attack to protect the two-story brick Standard Oil stabl and was successful; a feat which gave firefighters considerab satisfaction after recalling they had lost the stables in anoth fire three years earlier.

As tank after tank exploded and burned, the muffle whomps of the explosions sent rolling balls of flame pushin still more puffs of thick black smoke skyward. Thousands spectators jammed street cars, hundreds rode bicycles and sti more came in wagons and on foot. Elysian Park terraces we packed with throngs of specators and hundreds more watche from atop freight cars in the railroad yards. The courthous tower, more than a mile away at Temple and Fort (Broadwa Streets was jammed with spectators: lawyers, judges, clerk bailiffs, defendants, plaintiffs and jurors.

With the possible exception of the oil field fire, Los Angele had never seen such a spectacle. "Each explosion was followe by a spectacular volume of flame, capped with a column inky smoke, which shot hundreds of feet into the air, th particles twining and intertwining in wonderful convolution When darkness fell over the landscape, the scene was sti more magnificent," reported the ***Times.***

Shortly after nightfall, Strohm was notified of another fire i a two-story North Main Street lodging house. The fire wa quickly extinguished, but not before Mrs. E. E. Kent, 74, wa fatally burned when she tried to pour kerosine into a lamp near a burning candle. The chief engineer sensed it was going to be a long and difficult night. And it was. With still more tanks exploding, the glare lit up windows for a mile aroun and the flickerings were such as to suggest these building were burning, too, and caused a number of false alarms.

Michael Curran, LAFD chief engineer from February 1, 1893, to November 30, 1893.

At 1:45 a.m., a tremendous explosion rocked the refinery The concussion knocked down many spectators. Two mor tanks, exploding simultaneously, added to the fierce inferno

s Strohm and his firefighters continued to lay protective treams, he was notified that firefighters were battling a resaurant fire at 204 South Los Angeles Street. The messenger aid the firefighters expected to hold the burnout to the restauant, although two exposures, Leithaupt's Brass Works and ennett's Livery Stables, were being damaged.

By dawn, Strohm was confident they would not only save he refinery stables but the pumphouse, too. Flames continued o consume the warehouse and offices as well as 18 of the 20 anks. The three engines pumped all that day while the coal vagon shuttled in more bags of fuel for the steamers. The normous cloud of smoke created a black sky over Los Aneles. The fire was seen as far away as Pasadena. Flames coninued during the next several days and the weary firefighters radually returned to their stations while probably wondering vhether $2-a-day was adequate pay for their efforts. They were ater amazed to learn that total damages came to only $50,000.

Firefighters traditionally identify certain hazards and say, If *that place* ever gets going . . ." Usually they leave the senence unfinished because everyone in the station realizes the nevitable major fire that will result. *"That place"* in 1899 Los Angeles was a gigantic downtown block of industrial, commercial and tenement occupancies crammed inside a block bordered by Commercial Street on the north, Alameda Street on the east, Wilmington Street on the west and Requena (Market) Street on the south.

Most of the block was occupied by two occupancies: the W.H. Perry Lumber and Mill Company, which started operating 38 years earlier and the four and five-story brick complex of the Los Angeles Farming and Milling Company, owned by pioneer Angelenos Isaac Newton Van Nuys and J. B. Lankershim. Their names would later be given to areas in the San Fernando Valley and to two major thoroughfares in recognition of their interests in the valley.

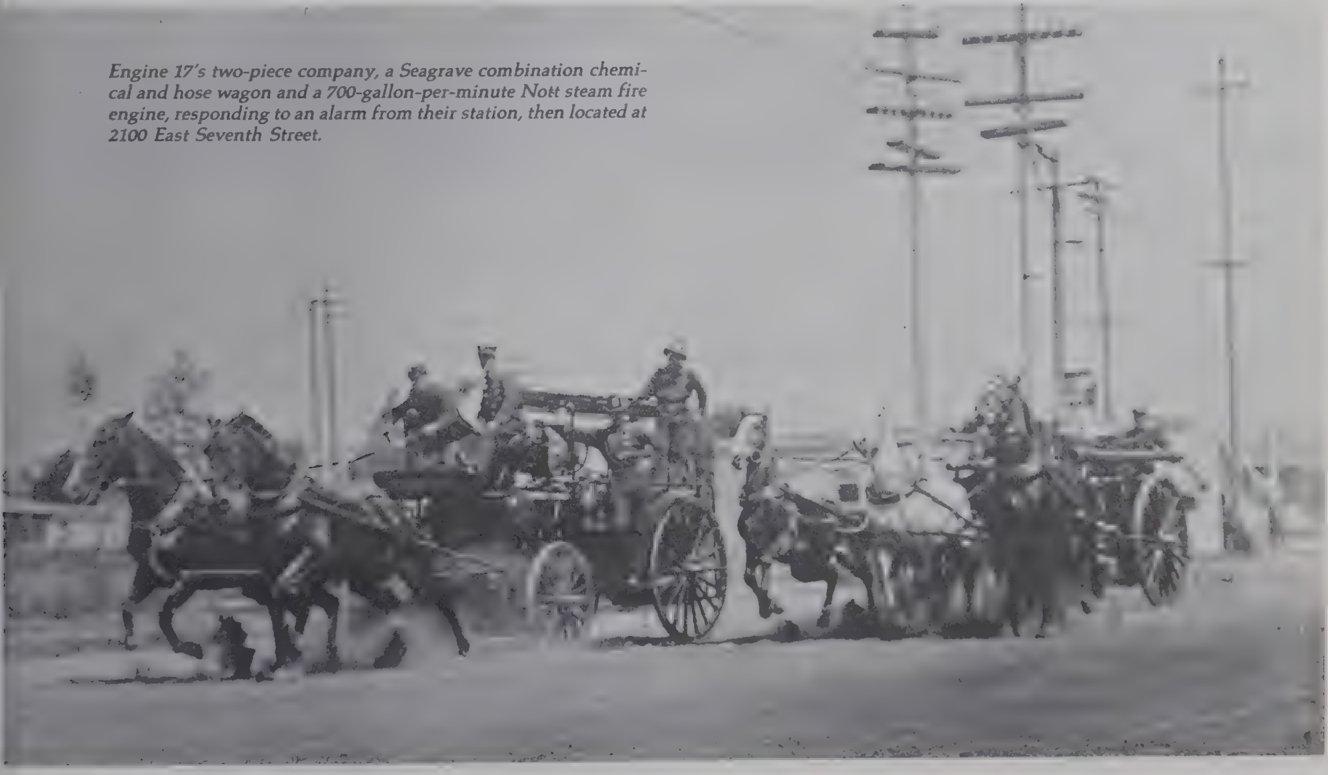
Perry Lumber, whose offices and planing mill fronted on Commercial Street, extended 450-feet south to Requena Street. That entire area held huge stacks of lumber, sashes, window blinds and other building materials that were stored behind and around the planing mill. The flour mill complex included 15 grain elevators filled with corn, wheat, barley and bran; a one-story wood warehouse holding 25,000 sacks of wheat and a two-story brick building in which 175 tons of hay were stored.

Inside this conflagration breeder were other doomed industrial occupancies, including J. F. Holbrook's oil pipe and well-casing warehouse at 313-315 Requena Street and Edward Lloyd's carriage and paint works at 308 Wilmington Street. Industrial and commercial exposures across all streets on all sides added to the high potential for disaster.

Early in the afternoon of Monday, September 18, 1899, a spark from a chimney in the basement engine room of the planing mill ignited nearby sawdust and shavings. George J. McClean, a millworker, first saw smoke and flames stabbing up through the wood-planked flooring. McClean ran outside, pulled Box 64 at Wilmington and Commercial Streets, then went back inside and tried to fight the fire by throwing hand grenades at it. Glass grenades were among the earliest fire extinguishers. Containing carbon tetrachloride, they were intended to shatter upon impact and douse small fires. That failing, McClean began to gather his tools preparatory to leaving the building. Another worker, George Knowlton, ran to the basement to help Engineer J. M. Dieter battle the flames with still more grenades. All three were fatally burned. A fourth worker died later.

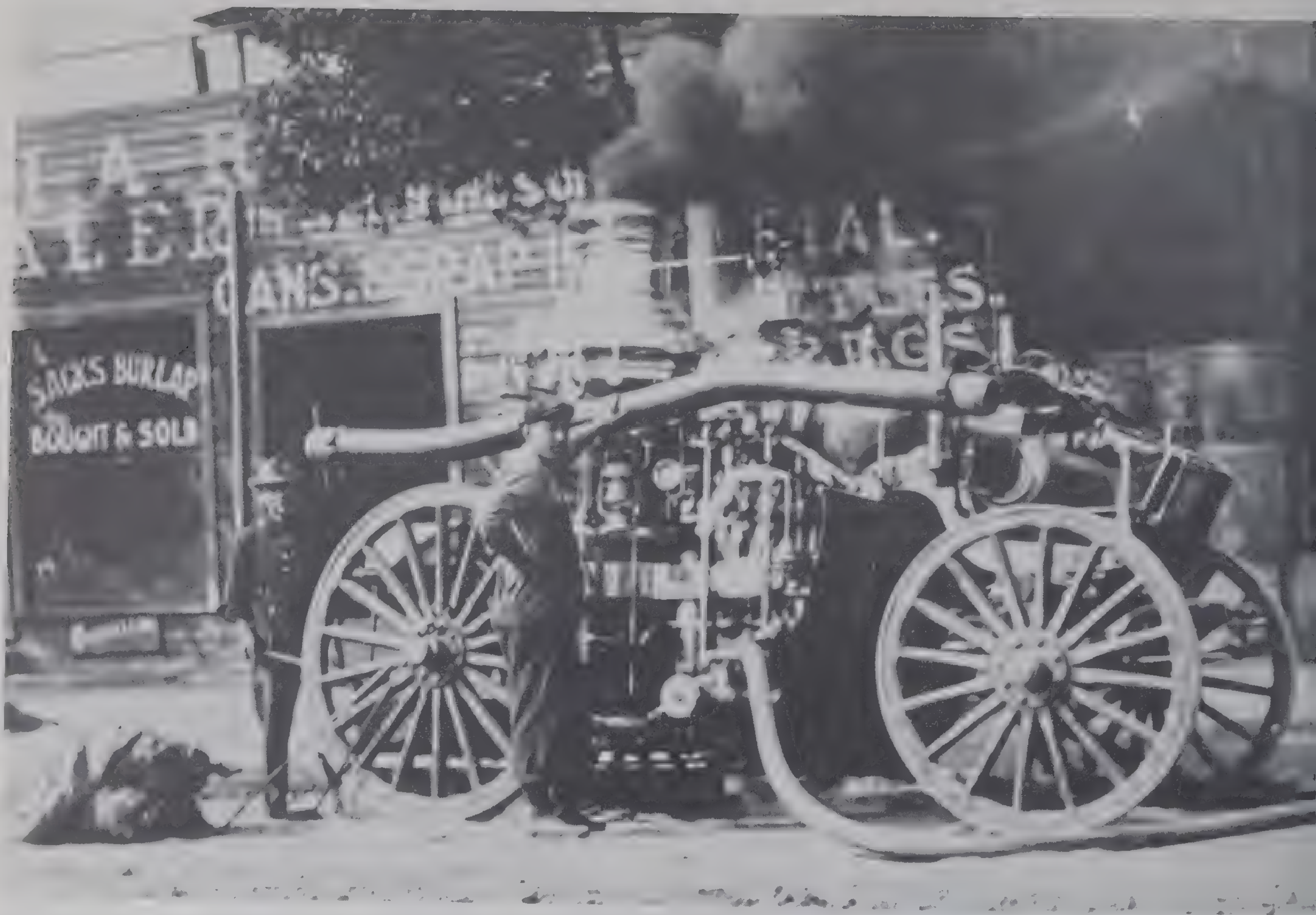
Chief Engineer Moore was in his headquarters office at the Hill Street station when he heard the six strokes of the alarm gong, followed by a pause, then four more clangs. Knowing the district and fearing the worst, Moore ran for his buggy and left with the first alarm companies. Turning right from Hill onto First Street, Moore saw a solid column of smoke and flames. What he had been expecting for years was now happening. He whipped his horse to greater speed. Assistant Chief Smith also saw the rapidly-worsening loomup as he answered the alarm.

Moore found the situation was worse than he imagined it would be. The planing mill, lumber yard and out-buildings were well-involved and flames were igniting the flour mill. He sent in a second alarm from Box 64 at 1:35 and followed it five



Engine 17's two-piece company, a Seagrave combination chemical and hose wagon and a 700-gallon-per-minute Nott steam fire engine, responding to an alarm from their station, then located at 2100 East Seventh Street.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF PAUL DITZEL



FROM THE COLLECTION OF PAUL DITZEL

Engine 5, a 1000-gallon-per-minute American LaFrance Metropolitan steamer, supplies water to firefighters battling a blaze at the Valley Hay and Grain Company near downtown Los Angeles around the turn of the century.

minutes later with a general alarm calling out 14 companies, including eight steam pumpers, four chemical companies and the Babcock and Hayes aerial ladders.

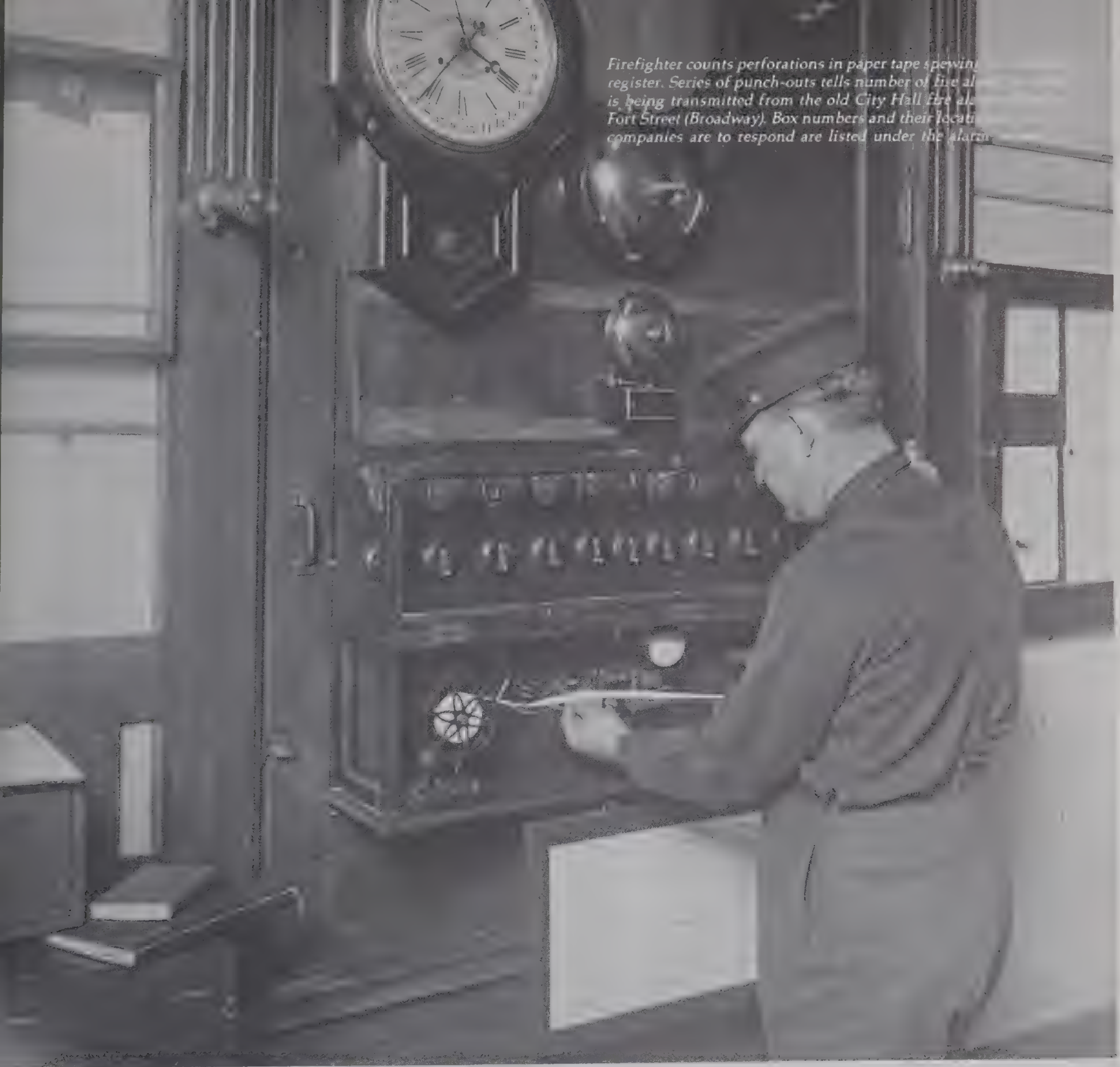
First-arriving engines were greatly-handicapped by the area's water supply: four-inch mains of hollowed wood logs joined together and no doubt dating from the city's earliest days. There was an eight-inch main along Los Angeles Street to the east and a supply from a nearby zanja. Firefighters would have to make-do with that because the best hydrant supply in the area was at Alameda and Commercial Streets. But heat was so intense the firefighters could not get close enough to use it. Some 13,000 feet of hose was laid as firefighters perimetered the fire while taking a fearsome beating along Alameda Street. Wind from the west pushed heat and smoke directly at them. Radiant heat shattered windows in industrial and commercial occupancies across the street and behind them. As flames took almost complete involvement of the flour and grain mill, hundreds of pigeons, which had nested there for years, circled above the smoke and flames and gradually fell into the fire. A new threat was quickly discovered as the wind wafted great chunks of firebrands and seeded fires on wood roofs of cottages and the Maier & Zebelein Brewery. The value of chemical engines once again proved themselves during the next hours as they snuffed the brewery flames while darting among cottages in a huge area as far east as the Los Angeles River. Chemical company firefighters laddered the cottages and, while operating streams on the spot fires, helped citizens who were beating out fires with wet blankets and wetting roofs with garden hoses. Chemical 5 was credited with knocking down incipient fires on cottage roofs at 447, 449 and 45 Ducommun Street.

Sparks ignited the roof of Lou Simpson's cottage at 430 Alis Street, three blocks from the main fire. When Chemical arrived, the firefighters were attacked by Mrs. Simpson wh told them: "Don't you fool fellows know no better than t monkey with my things. I will have you know I'm insured. Ignoring her, the firefighters laddered the roof of the cottag which was not well-involved. Firefighter H. A. Springer fell 18 feet through the fire-weakened roof and suffered sever sprains.

When the wind slackened, the exposure problem diminished as the fire, together with the thousands of gallons of wate from streams being lobbed into the flames, enabled Moore to declare the fire controlled at 3 p.m. Three engines remaine throughout the night while firefighters wet down ruins which would smolder for days. The fire, with damages exceeding $250,000, was the most destructive the city had ever seen. I also was one of the most exhausting the firefighters eve fought. Capt. J. Clinton Johnson of Engine 8, worked 40 hours

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Capt. J. Clinton Johnson
Engine 8
Died from over exertion and exposure at fire
February 12, 1905



Firefighter counts perforations in paper tape spewin
register. Series of punch-outs tells number of fire al
is being transmitted from the old City Hall fire al
Fort Street (Broadway). Box numbers and their locati
companies are to respond are listed under the alar

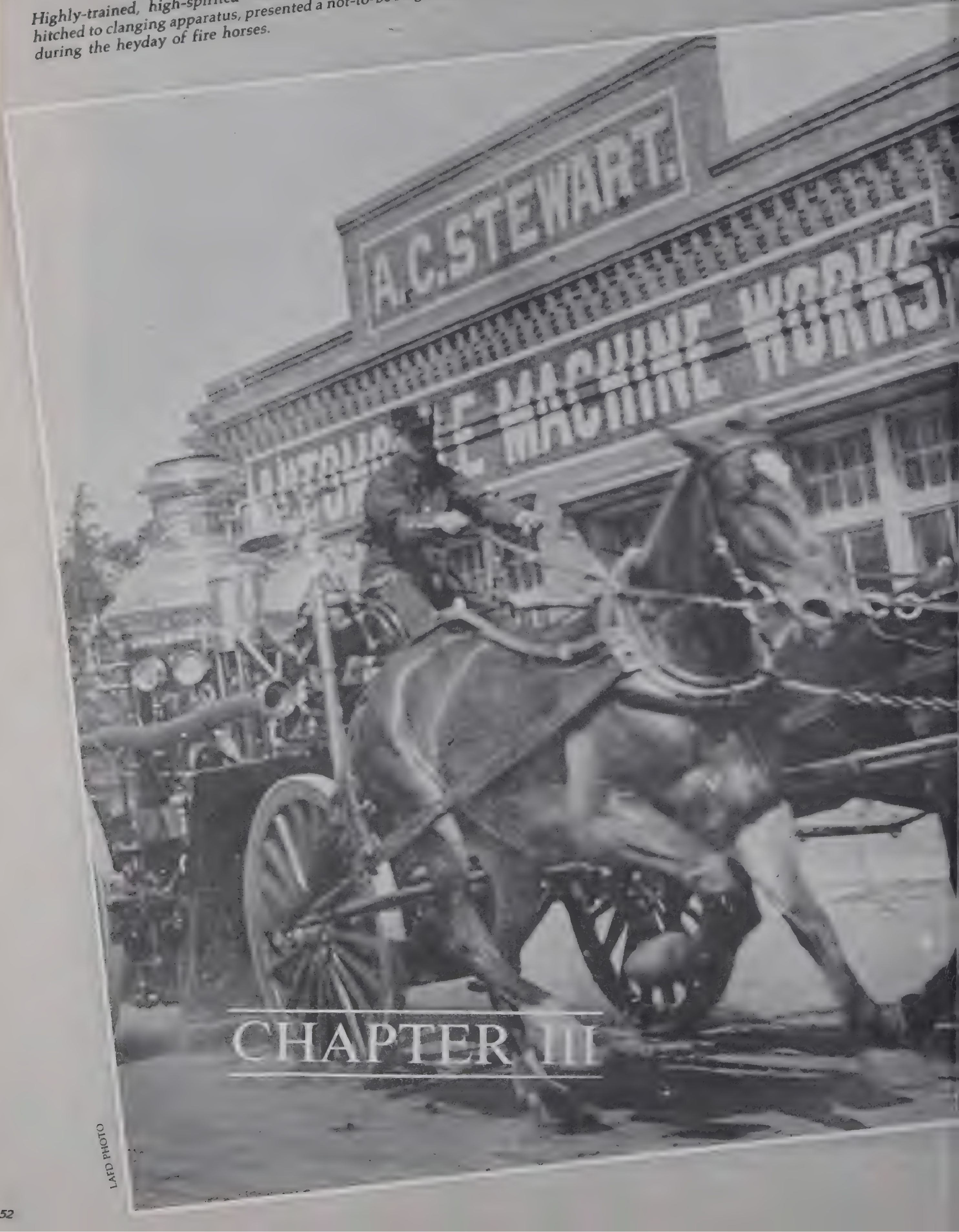
ithout relief before collapsing from overexertion. He never ecovered and died, February 12, 1905.

As church bells rang out the end of the century and the eginning of 1900, the LAFD could proudly look back upon henomenal growth and achievements during its 14 years of ervice against odds which more often than not seemed insurountable. The LAFD entered the twentieth century with 120 fficers and firefighters: 78 of them on engine companies, 21 n chemical-hose wagons; 16 hook and laddermen and three ssigned to drive Chief Moore and Assistant Chief Charles uselehr.

LAFD-owned resources included 13 steamers (two of them in eserve) 12 chemical-hose wagons, 10 hose companies, four hook and ladders (two of them single-chassis city service rigs) two supply wagons (at least one of them a coal-carrier) 80 horses, 18 fire stations and 194 street fire alarm boxes. Water would continue to be a major problem, but there was optimism there, too, with 660 hydrants in place and more planned.

Altogether, it looked like a Happy New Year 1900 for the LAFD. So, too, was Councilman "Uncle Jake" Kuhrts highly-pleased as he saw the New Year in while listening raptly for the pinging of alarms on the five-inch tapper bell in his home. Perhaps one of his New Year resolutions was to look up Billy Buffum and tell him of the LAFD's progress. Billy would be mighty interested.

Highly-trained, high-spirited horses hurrying to alarms while quick-hitched to clanging apparatus, presented a not-to-be forgotten street scene during the heyday of fire horses.


A.C. STEWART.
AUTOMOBILE MACHINE WORKS

LAFD PHOTO

CHAPTER III

HEYDAY OF THE HORSES

Nothing in Los Angeles Fire Department lore comes close to rivaling the colorful traditions of the legendary fire horses. There was no more memorable street scene than the traffic-stopping spectacle of the highly-trained, high-spirited horses hurrying to alarms while quick-hitched to the clanging chemical and hose rigs, hook and ladders, chiefs' buggies and smoke-chuffing steamers.

Seemingly endless are the stories of the LAFD fire horses who were bred for the job and the firefighters who trained them for duty and for tricks. And then there were the countless stories told of the perils of answering alarms, the horses who died in the line of duty, as well as their idiosyncrasies which were long remembered, too. And always there was that strong bond between the horses and the firefighters. The nostalgic aura of the days of the horse-drawn rigs continued long after the last LAFD horses were retired in 1921 to pasture the rest of their days in Griffith Park.

Going into the twentieth century, the LAFD had 80 horses. By 1912, when the heyday of the horses reached its pinnacle, the department had 163. Horses were purchased from established breeders in midwestern and southern states where bloodlines and forage were known throughout the fire service for producing the highest-quality horses. California horses were, at that time, mostly mustangs or broncos which were too light and otherwise ill-suited for LAFD use.

Cost was not the main consideration that precluded the purchase of purebred Morgans and Percherons; the two bloodlines most desired by fire departments. Breeding purebred Morgan or Percheron stallions with crossbreed mares, known as grade draft horses, produced colts with qualities which made them ideal for fire duty. Crossbreeds were smaller, lighter, faster, heartier, cheaper and less expensive to feed and maintain than purebreds.

As other fire departments did, the LAFD mainly purchased geldings (castrated stallions) whose docile temperament seldom varied. Stallions were shunned because they would most likely chew or kick down their stalls. Their dispositions were apt to result in firefighters being kicked or bitten. Stallions could be expected to buck when an alarm clanged in the stations or while being harnessed. They were certain to lose all interest in rushing to a fire if they sensed an approachable mare. So, too, were mares rarely in LAFD rosters. In 1904, for example, only three are shown and they were probably assigned to hauling supply wagons. Mares were hard to manage, highly-excitable and nervous horses whose frequent daily bodily functions caused added cleanup work for firefighters.

Horses were purchased when they were between the age of three, the time they were more-easily trained, and six, when they were in the prime and more tractable. These older horses were slightly preferred because better judgments could then be made of their size, strength and disposition. Between three and six years, the horses were what breeders called "broken" or "started" which meant the animals were accustomed to wearing harness, responding to the reins and their drivers' commands while pulling wagons at the breeding farms. Fire horses therefore had completed their basic training before they were shipped to Los Angeles by rail and corralled at the LAFD's

Turning corners required preci
by driver of Eng

Corporation Yard on Pasadena Avenue between Avenues 19 and 20. On February 24, 1893, the fire commission created the position of horse caretaker and he was assigned to the yard. (The department's machine shop behind Fire Station 4 at 227 Aliso Street was later moved to the same site which, by 1986, was the location of the LAFD's division of supply and maintenance.)

Crossbred Morgans were usually black or various hues of brown. Weighing between 1000 and 1300 pounds, they stood between 15 and 16 hands (around five feet) as measured from their shoulders to their hooves. Smaller than crossbred Percherons, they were usually assigned to lightweight chemical and hose companies and to pull chiefs' buggies. The crossbred Percherons were black or gray (which turned snow-white as they grew older) weighed up to around 1500 pounds and stood about 17 hands (between five and six feet). These huskier horses were ideal for pulling hook and ladder companies and the heavier steamers of up to around 1000-gallon-per-minute pumping capacity, such as the famous American LaFrance Metropolitans, which the LAFD began buying in 1899.

Horses had names before the department bought them. That name usually was only one or two syllables — Bob, Sam, Izzy, Rock, Rufus, Pete — to facilitate the horse's response when the driver called an order. Firefighters sometimes renamed their horses to appropriately signify specific traits. Among the LAFD's most famous horses was Searchlight, a chiefs' buggy horse, who, so the story goes, had an uncanny knack, especially at night, for seeking out shortcuts through alleys and streets while answering downtown alarms.

Officially, each horse was known by its assigned number which was branded on its skin. On May 12, 1910, the fire commission ruled that branding on the horse's flank was cruel. Thereafter, numbers were branded on the horse's right front hoof. The resulting indentation was filled in with the number in silver or gold paint. Another humane consideration was a rule against over-use of whips while urging horses to speed. Breaking that rule was cause for dismissal of the driver.

There were various methods for training fire horses and the better drivers did the best job of it; perhaps because they, too, had grown up on farms. The horse was, moreover, likelier to respond to whoever fed it and that was among the driver's jobs, too. Contrary to romantic myth, fire horses were not intelligent and were, like the majority of their species, among the least intelligent of all barnyard animals. Pigs are smarter. Horses are, however, creatures of habit and therefore were most easily-trained by having them repeat over and over again what was expected of them. Learning-by-repetition largely explains the misconception that fire horses were intelligent.

The horse was trained to know only two places in the firehouse: Its stall and its place in front of the apparatus while standing directly under the spring-tension-loaded hanging harness. Training a new horse typically began with the driver repeatedly leading the animal from its stall to its place in front of the apparatus and back to the stall. A rope was often strung from the apparatus hitching tongue to the stall. The horse thus perceived he was to closely follow a straight line from his stall to the rig.

During advanced training, a firefighter tugged at the alarm gong chain. The instant the bell clanged, another firefighter whacked the horse's rear with a short length of hose attached to a board. The startled animal bolted from the stall and was pulled to the front of the apparatus. This was a time of potential injury to firefighters who were often kicked or stepped on by the frightened horse. The overall learning process was more often expedited by using a trained horse so the rookie horse would more easily learn by example.

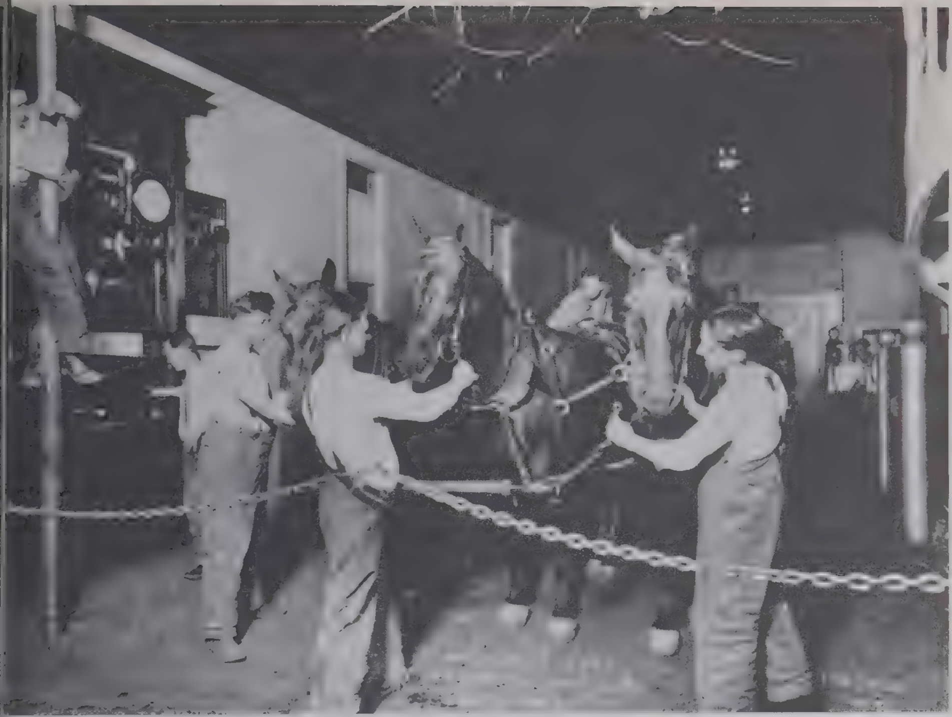
As the horse recognized what was expected when the alarm bell rang, training progressed to the final stage. At the sound of the gong, the horse hurried, without being urged, from hi stall, straight to the rig and backed under the harness. Th driver, meanwhile, climbed into his seat box, fastened hi safety belt and pulled at the hanging harness rope. The harnes dropped over the horse's flanks.

Only three snaps were required to complete harnessing eac horse. The first snap was at the collar. The other snaps were a the end of the reins leading to each side of the horse's bridl bit. Horses almost always wore their bits, because that insure a fast hitch. If time was going to be lost in getting out of th station — and most companies could push off in about 4 seconds — it would most likely occur when a balky horse ha to have its jaw forced open to insert the bit. Bits were remove only during feeding times.

As the LAFD acquired more of the heavier Metropolita engines, the three-horse hitch became increasingly necessary especially in hilly districts. The center position was where th best horse in the house was trained to go when the alarm rang Turning corners was accomplished by the driver cueing th center horse by tugging right or left on the reins while, fraction of a second later, similarly reining the two oute horses. As the center horse bore to the left or right, the other followed suit while themselves responding to the reins. Driving a two or three-horse hitch required precision training teamwork and coordination between the drivers and the animals. It was moreover, the time of worst peril for horses an drivers.

One stumble, slip or falter, which could easily occur on rai and mud-slickened streets with their trolley rails and ruts, wa likely to cause a horse to fall. The other horse or horses wer almost certain to be dragged down, too. The momentum of th apparatus sometimes ran over and landed on top of the horses if the rig did not jackknife or overturn. Braking was crude an usually consisted of a combination of reins and wooden handles which the driver and sometimes the engineer used t apply pressure against the wheels.

Department regulations required that response speeds b held to a fast trot; a rule that apparently was broken with som frequency, judging by admonishments from the fire commission and chiefs as well as contemporary photographs showing horses at full gallop. Trotting was a safety measure, considering street conditions, the bulk and weight of apparatus. De-



When the alarm sounded, horses hurried, without being urged, from their stalls to the apparatus and backed under the harness suspended from the ceiling. The driver tugged at the hanging harness rope and the harness dropped over the horses' flanks. Only three snaps were required to complete harnessing each horse. Most companies could push off in only about 45 seconds.

LAFD PHOTO

pite the increasing number of alarms as Los Angeles grew and owntown pedestrian and traffic congestion increased, acci- ents and runaway teams were infrequent; another testimonial the drivers' skill and the horses' training.

Further evidence of the superb teamwork between the dri- ers and the horses was the single-mindedness — which might en be described as tunnel vision — as the horses raced to arms. They could not be allowed to be distracted as some- mes happened to other horses on the street. Delivery wagon orses, frightened by the approaching fire horses and the anging and clattering apparatus, sometimes panicked and ed. Laws required owners of horses to securely tie their ani- als to hitching posts when left unattended, especially in the owntown district. The law was frequently ignored.

Some idea of the obedience instilled in these magnificent fire orses was observed at fires where they seemed oblivious to e sounds and sights of firefighting and the pumping of eamers which left the streets filled with smoke. The horses ood patiently despite the shouting of orders by chiefs, falling lass and walls, roaring flames, sparks and debris which land- d on and all around them. Nor were they likely to flee in error with the added hubbub caused by thousands of specta- ors.

That fire horses were a very special breed is indisputable. All f which becomes more remarkable considering that the only hing predictable about a horse is its unpredictability. Despite heir breeding, careful selection and training, some flunked robation and were sold. One crossbred Morgan, who was not n the job long enough to earn a firehouse name, performed well while answering calls along cobblestone streets. The geld- ng did not, however, like paved streets. Refusing to pull the ig along them, the horse simply laid down in his harness and tubbornly refused to get up. The fire department sold him to a Chinese peddler of vegetables.

Certainly the most embarrassing rookie horse that ever washed out of the LAFD was officially branded No. 65. Train- rs discovered the crossbred Morgan was one of the fastest hey had ever seen and seemed so ideally qualified for fire duty hat they expected great fame would accrue. Equally impressed was Chief Engineer Strohm who told his close friend, Mayor Meredith P. Snyder, that he was going to name the horse Snyder in his honor's honor. Snyder passed his firehouse training with ease and was put in service at Hose Company No. 9 at 916 South Santee Street. Snyder continued to live up to all expectations until the first rainfall.

On the drizzling morning of May 31, 1905, the gong struck Box 177 at Mateo and Sacramento Streets. The three Percheron grays turned out of the station with the steamer, while Snyder followed close behind with a hose rig. As soon as he cleared quarters, Snyder realized he was in rain and mud. Snyder instantly stopped and refused to go further. A sugar cube and a wallop with a training paddle did not change the horse's mind. Snyder simply did not like wet weather and he liked mud even less. The firefighters called the corral and ordered a replacement horse, while Strohm wondered how he was going to break the news to Mayor Snyder.

The first recorded LAFD accident occurred shortly after midnight, June 22, 1891, when flames, starting at 140 South Spring Street, destroyed the entire Solomon Block of commercial buildings. Barely had Engine 4 pulled out of quarters when one

FROM THE COLLECTION

Fire horses hurrying to fires could easily stumble, slip or falter and fall. The rest of the team was almost certain to be dragged down, too. The momentum of the heavy apparatus sometimes ran over or landed on top of the horses with fatal results. While this accident occurred in Utica, New York, around 1900, similar mishaps took place in Los Angeles.

Accidents were among the hazards confronting firefighters as they answered alarms. A broken axle is believed to have caused this steam fire engine to overturn. It is not known whether any firefighters were injured.

of the gray Percherons slipped on a trolley car track and fell. The steamer landed on top of the horse. A broken boiler valve spewed steam which scalded the badly cut and bruised horse until firefighters and passersby freed him. It is not known whether the horse survived.

Engine 4 was involved in a worse accident, May 6, 1904, when Box 322 at Main and Schiffelin Streets rang in shortly after 9:30 p.m. While the three-horse hitch was answering the alarm, the wheels of the Metropolitan steamer caught on Southern Pacific Railroad tracks on North Main Street near Alhambra Avenue. The engine tipped over. Driver J. Y. Del Valle, who suffered serious injuries, was momentarily trapped in the wreckage. Fortunately, his seat belt saved his life. The crash threw Firefighter Martin Dunn 20 feet. Dunn's left ear was nearly severed and he suffered other cuts. Stoker George Dunn also was thrown from the engine, but was unhurt.

The three horses, breaking away from the steamer, fled along Alhambra and onto a railroad trestle. The crash cost the department one of its best and most beautifully-matched teams of dapple-gray Percherons. One of them, Colonel, fell through the trestle and was killed. The two other horses were badly hurt and probably never answered another alarm. Box 322 turned out to be a false alarm.

Horses were rarely to blame for mishaps. Engine 3 answered an alarm from Box 34, San Pedro and Third Streets, on a 1907 night when after-theater crowds filled the downtown streets. Seconds after Engine 3 pulled out of its Hill Street station, Engineer William W. Tebbets, riding the coal box at the rear, realized the rig was weaving and narrowly-missing pedestrians and carriages.

Looking over the collar of the boiler, Tebbets saw there was nobody in the driver's seat. He climbed over the boiler and the air chamber of the careening rig and into the driver's seat. Grabbing the reins, he took control of the horses and continued to the fire. Later investigation found the regular driver was off-duty. The callman who had been hired to replace him slept through the alarm. He was discharged and Tebbets was officially commended.

Slippery streets caused another memorable accident as Engine 11 was responding to an alarm shortly after 8 a.m., November 28, 1908. As the horses turned from Temple Street onto Fremont Avenue, the rain-slick pavement sent the heavy steamer into a skid. The horses lost their footing and crashed through the plate glass window of the Globe Furniture Company store. Miraculously, the horses suffered only minor injuries, but the steamer's wagon pole was snapped off. The basement fire in a three-story apartment building at 121 Bunker Hill Avenue was minor.

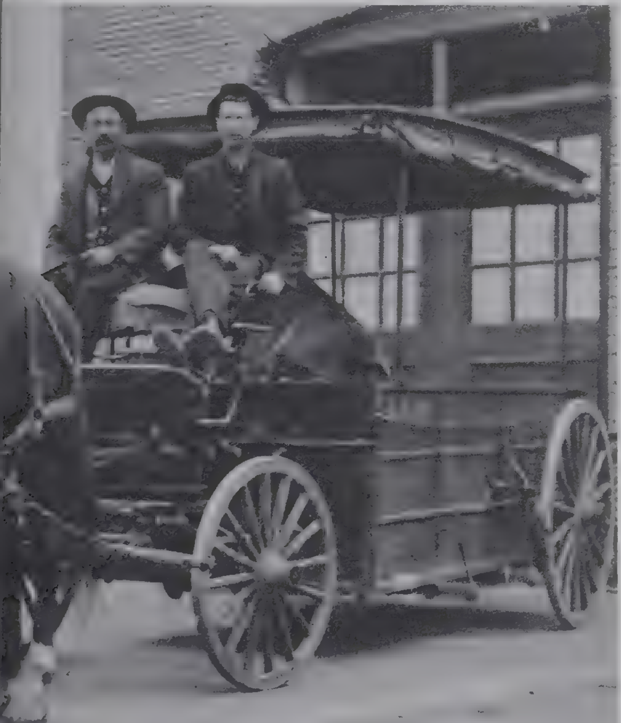
LAFD PHOTO

The most tragic and spectacular accident involving horses occurred on the afternoon of February 13, 1908, while drivers were exercising horses pulling Engine 6's Ahrens steamer and its hose wagon. The drivers left in opposite directions from the 1279 West Temple Street firehouse. Fifteen minutes later both teams were at full speed when they reached the blind intersection of Edgeware Road and Bellevue Avenue.

e head-to-head impact threw the four horses to the pave- . The momentum caused the steamer and hose wagon to on top of them. One horse was killed instantly and her had to be put to death. Driver Irving Johnson, trapped e jumbled wreckage, suffered severe internal injuries as pain-crazed animals flayed with their hooves. Johnson ved.

he expectable service life of a fire horse was around four s, but many saw duty for more than 20. Horses were ted among busy and slow companies as well as stations large districts to cover or hills to be climbed. Although policy extended the service life, a sudden alarm, after days ttle or no fire response, required the horse to almost imme- ely go into a fast trot which could prove fatal. On February 1896, Chemical Engine 1's horse, Tony, fell dead while vering a 9:10 a.m. alarm to C. J. Judd's carpet store at rth Street and Broadway.

oot problems were a common ailment among horses, espe- y in districts with rutted or cobblestone streets which aged hooves. Starting in 1907, the department hired a seshoer, T. M. Hall, and an assistant, Charles Motherhead. ore that, shoeing was contracted among neighborhood cksmiths. Referred to as Corn Doctors, because corn-like wths were common and had to be shaved off, Hall and otherhead made monthly house calls to each fire station.



D's Corn Doctors made fire station house calls in a wagon contain- a blacksmith's forge, anvil, tools and a supply of horseshoes. Foot blems were common among horses and corn-like growths had to be ied off hooves. The wagon needed only one horse, but it was drawn wo. If an alarm hit while a horse's hooves were being worked on, the e horse was quickly hitched to the apparatus.

he Corn Doctors traveled in a canopy-covered wagon con- ning a blacksmith's forge, anvil, tools and a supply of shoes. e wagon needed only one horse, but it was drawn by two. If alarm hit while a horse's hooves were being worked on, the re horse was quickly hitched to the apparatus. Hall and otherhead, after removing the corns, put rubber pads be- een the hooves and the shoes.

Fire horses wore two types of shoes: cork and metal. Horses in hilly districts were cork-shoed for better traction. Other horses wore metal shoes. Extra shoes were hung in firehouses in the event a horse lost a shoe before the Corn Doctor's next visit. Indicative of the fire horses' strengths were occasions when shoes came loose during responses and were thrown through second-floor windows.

The glory days of the horses were not altogether glorious for firefighters. Drivers had to arise about dawn to fill the horses' water buckets. Rule 13, Section 2 of the LAFD's 1901 Rules and Regulations required a 30-minute wait after watering before the horses were fed at 6:30 a.m. Section 1 of the rule said, "Horses shall be fed not more than four quarts of grain and about 20 pounds of hay daily and twice a week shall be fed a bran mush." It was the driver's duty to shovel out the stalls and replace the straw bedding.

These duties took about an hour during which time the drivers tapped on the fire pole to awaken the other firefighters. After breakfast, the driver exercised the horses for at least 30 minutes while they were hitched to the apparatus which could not be driven more than a three-block radius of the station. In wet weather the horses were exercised without the apparatus.

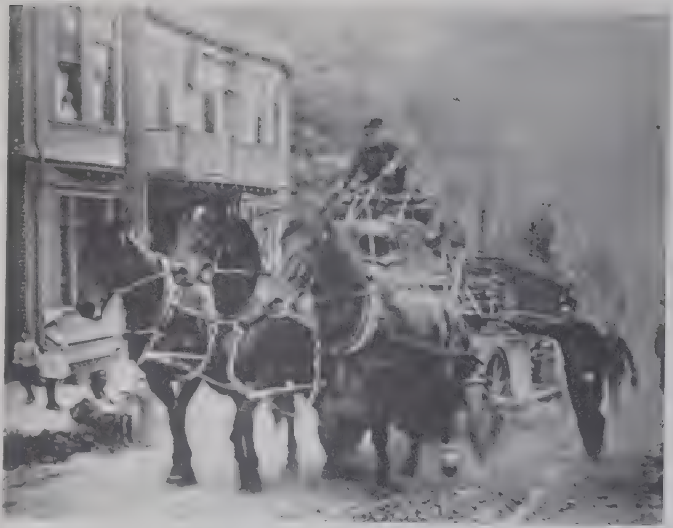
After exercising, said Rule 13, Section 3, "Horses shall be thoroughly groomed every morning, their hooves picked out and cleaned, their manes and tails washed with soap and water once every week and thoroughly dried after washing; the sheath shall be washed every two weeks. Gray or white horses may have stains sponged off with warm water and soap, but must be thoroughly dried immediately. White legs may be washed in the same manner, otherwise the legs must never be washed." Horses were required to be "thoroughly washed and scrubbed at least once a month, weather permitting."

Exercising time often brought neighborhood youngsters to watch and perhaps reward their favorite horse with sugar cubes or an apple for a trick well done, although teaching tricks to horses was in violation of Rule 13, Section 5, but openly ignored. Firefighters trained horses to open and close water spigots and gates, to kneel and shake hands. Among the LAFD's famous tricksters was a horse shown as Jerry on the official roster, but who was better known as The Fire Eater.

The firefighters claimed Jerry was mostly self-taught, starting with his first assignment to Engine 9 when it was located at Ninth and Santee Streets. Jerry stood on his stall rails to beg for tobacco. If that failed, he would pick up and eat any cigar butt, cigarette or pipe tobacco, whether or not it was lit. Jerry

FROM THE COLLECTION OF PAUL DITZEL

Firefighters trained horses to perform tricks such as shaking hands and opening and closing water spigots.



CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY/TICOR TITLE INSURANCE

Horses stationed in hilly districts wore shoes of cork to give them better traction. Even at that, firefighters sometimes had to get off the rig and push while aiding the horses as they struggled with heavy apparatus up this First Street hill.

often snorted smoke and could sense snuff and chewing tobacco which he would nuzzle out of the firefighters' pockets.

By the time Jerry was transferred to Engine 10, located in 1910 at 16th and Hill Streets, he had added to his bag of tricks by dancing in his stall, shaking hands while extending a hoof and entertaining visitors by elongating his lower lip, baring his teeth, lowering an ear, cocking an eye and leering. Jerry's driver, Joe Sepulveda, said the horse could smell apples or oranges the instant they were brought into the station and pawed the floor of his stall until he got one. Engine 10 firefighters learned that Jerry disliked sharing audiences with other horses and would jealously snort and otherwise protest if visitors looked at other horses. While Jerry was performing, the firefighters made certain the chains across the other horse stalls were securely fastened. Jerry insisted upon center stage.

Horses would not be fed again until 4 o'clock when dinner consisted of barley hay, most of which came from farms in the area of what is now Highland Park and East Los Angeles. All this work by the drivers did not mean the other firefighters were playing poker. There was hay and other supplies to unload and lift with block-and-tackle devices to the station's loft.

Floor watches were rotated among the firefighters from 6 a.m., until 8 p.m. Part of the floor watch's duty was to keep the stalls "clear of all matter." That horses had hearty appetites is evidenced by the 1913-1914 LAFD annual report which says they consumed 700 tons of hay. That figures out to about four tons per horse, not including bran mush, rolled barley, apples and oranges and whatever else the horses cadged. Animal waste was wheel-barrowed out the back door of the station where it was collected by LAFD wagons and hauled away; presumably to be sold as fertilizer.

Upon returning from alarms, the sweating horses had to be walked and blanketed in what firefighters referred to as "cooling out" which was described in Rule 13, Section 4. "Horses' mouths and nostrils must be sponged out, and (they) may be given a few swallows of water and, if warm, must be scraped, rubbed dry and blanketed. Sweat should be removed from around the eyes and under the tail with a damp sponge. Horses must never be given grain while hot after a run or exercise."

Before the days of modern veterinary medicine, horses were susceptible to a distemper known as epizootic disease. In 1872, the disease spread from fire horses in Montreal and Toronto to most horses in eastern United States departments. Hundreds of horses died. On November 9, only a few of Boston's diseased fire horses were on their feet when a downtown fire

FROM THE COLLECTION OF RODGER EMBURY

started. Firefighters and civilian-volunteers slowly pulled th heavy steamers and other apparatus to the fire. What otherwis might have been a relatively minor blaze turned into The Grea Boston Fire which burned for 16 hours, destroyed 776 build ings, killed 11 firefighters and resulted in $76 million in dam age.

Upstairs dormitories in LAFD firehouses had trapdoor which fitted around the sliding pole hole. Although the trap doors protected firefighters from falling through the hole their main purpose was to help keep apparatus floor flies an odors from permeating the bunkrooms, especially in warm months. During the summertime firefighters sometimes alle viated the odor problem by letting the horses graze in th backyards of fire stations. Occasionally the horses got into neighbors' vegetable patch. That inevitably resulted in complaint to the fire commission and just as inevitably result ed in fines levied against the firefighters.

Pole hole trapdoors were often left open in cool months t permit heat to rise into the bunkrooms, although that mean firefighters slept fitfully. Their sleep was disturbed by th incessant grinding of teeth as horses chomped their hay an bedding, rattled their stall chains and kept up a steady tatto by stomping their feet.

Shortly after 11 p.m., May 7, 1911, two hours after Engine firefighters had turned in for the night at their Aliso Stree station, they were suddenly awakened by an unusually lou commotion as the horses snorted, stomped and kicked th sides of their stalls. The firefighters yelled at them to kee quiet. When the horses persisted, the firefighters investigate

ched team of Percherons pull Engine Company 4, a 900-gallon-per-minute American LaFrance ropolitan steamer, purchased in 1899. Photo taken near company quarters which were lo-d at 227 Aliso Street, where the Gorter water er was built.

nd found Firefighter Walthall O. Fitch, 28, lying mortally njured at the foot of the pole hole. Fitch was a known sleepvalker and fell head-first to the apparatus floor.

The incident was a virtual sequel to the death of Captain Thomas S. Home, who also was fatally injured at 1 a.m., April 2, 1907, in a fall through the pole hole at Engine 19, when it vas located at 1435 North Main Street. The firefighters first ecame aware of the accident when the horses awakened them. alls through pole holes were common. The department first ut rubber mats at the base of the poles and later mounted afety metal rings around the dormitory holes.

As was commonly practiced among other departments, the ervice life of LAFD horses was prolonged by annual vacations vhich enabled the horses to run free and pasture in suburban lfalfa fields. When their usefulness ended, they were transerred to other city departments for hauling wagons, auctioned mong public buyers, or retired to live out their days in Grifith Park. Some were sold to slaughter houses; a practice that nay have ended after a local Hearst paper published an article aying that the fire horses' years of loyalty were being shabbily ewarded by one-way trips to dog food canneries.

In telling and retelling of sagas from the days of the horses n the firehouses and horses on the fireground, there arose a aying that the department took better care of its horses than it lid its firefighters. Facts do not support that legend. Starting August 1, 1894, the City Council approved 10-day annual vacaions for firefighters. They could also choose the medical services of the police department surgeon or their family doctor nd be reimbursed. Pensions became effective June 10, 1901, when the LAFD was only 15 years old. Its basic provisions provided for payment of one-half of the salary being earned at the rank held after 20 years of service and at reaching the age of 60. A service-connection pension, such as that resulting from a disability incurred in the line of duty, was paid at the rate of one-half of the salary of the rank held at the retirement date. There were also dependent benefits. Subsequent changes made the LAFD pension system among the finest in the American fire service.

The first, or at least one of the first, disability pensions went to Assistant Chief Charles Fuselehr on November 15, 1902. Fuselehr was badly hurt while answering a downtown alarm. Swerving his horse to avoid hitting pedestrians, he crashed into a pole. Fuselehr reportedly died four years later from complications resulting from those injuries.

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Assistant Chief Charles Fuselehr
Died from injuries suffered in a buggy accident in 1902

Firefighter appointments and promotions depended less upon who-they-knew and more on what-they-knew starting with the first civil service test on May 14, 1903. Firefighters with less than six months service were required to take the exam, along with job applicants without experience. The 27 who took the test were graded on a point system: duties (6 points), experience (2), spelling (1), arithmetic (one-half) and penmanship (one-half).

Questions included; "What is the cost of an aerial truck?" "What is the average cost of a hose wagon harness with collars and hames?" and "Why do they use trap doors on pole holes?" When results were posted, May 28, Samuel H. Dodd was the high man on the eligibility list. He had joined the LAFD on April 1, 1903, and was to become a First Assistant Chief Engineer. His grandson, Firefighter Don Dodd of Engine 61, is a member of the LAFD's historical society.

Ironically, the chief engineer and assistant chief were the only department members exempt from civil service protection. Their job security was subject to the political whim of mayors and their appointed fire commissioners; a situation which would not be wholly rectified until 1925. Strohm was the first chief engineer to experience the inherent injustice and political abuse of the system. He would have saved himself a lot of aggravation had he applied for a pension to which he was certainly entitled after he was nearly killed at a minor fire a few doors from where he lived.

Strohm left his home immediately after Box 34, San Pedro Street and East Third Street, tapped in on his alarm register at 11:35 a.m., that December 9, 1901. The fire was in Mrs. Carrie Freeman's residence at 310 Omar Street, near Third Street. Strohm arrived before the apparatus. A chemical engine and a steamer controlled the blaze in 15 minutes with a loss of $400. Before sending the companies home, Strohm climbed a ladder to a second-floor window to make certain there would be no rekindle. When he was almost to the top rung, the ladder suddenly slipped and broke into three pieces. The 200-pound, stocky chief engineer plunged 14 feet to the sidewalk.

Strohm suffered a triangular gash on the back of his head, a probable brain concussion and he aggravated right ankle injuries which occurred at an earlier fire. Strohm was carried home where his condition worsened during the next several days. He became deaf in his left ear and his right ankle was found to be broken. Hovering between life and death, Strohm turned delirious, ripped off his bandages and tried to get out of bed to go to headquarters to work on his annual report. Every time the tapper bell sounded an alarm, Strohm tried to go. The tapper bell was disconnected and Strohm remained bedridden.

Coincidentally, Strohm's accident occurred immediately before the worst epidemic of fires in the city's history. During December there were 60 fires; topping the previous high of 45. Fortunately, most fires were trifling, although three persons burned to death and many horses became so exhausted that they had to be sent to the Corporation Yard for a rest while reserve horses took their places in the stations. Strohm's subordinates took care of the fires, while Commissioner Kuhrts attended to administrative duties.

Strohm fortunately knew none of this while bedridden during his slow recuperation. But there was no keeping him in bed shortly after 5:30 a.m., January 15, 1902, when he was awakened by clanging apparatus. Looking from his window he saw the glare of a major downtown fire that was to become the city's worst since an entire block of commercial buildings, including Perry Lumber and Los Angeles Farming and Milling, was destroyed on September 18, 1899. Strohm was unable to sit or stand, so he ordered a hose wagon to pick him up.

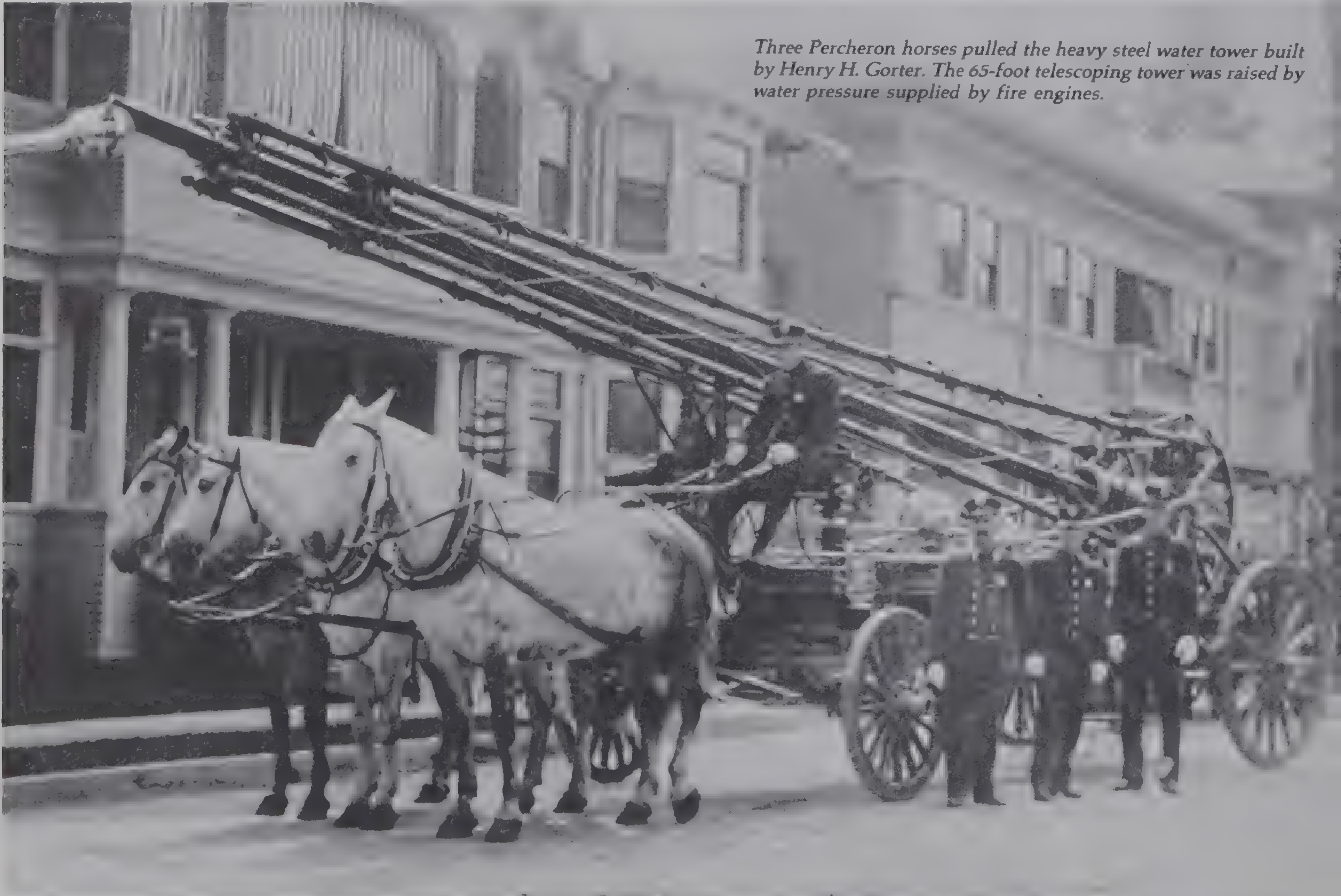
Strohm arrived a few minutes after Assistant Chief George H. O'Donnell had turned in a second alarm for the fire which was completely involving the huge, four-story brick Newmark Brothers wholesale coffee, tea and spice warehouse at 218-221 North Los Angeles Street. Flames and radiant heat had already touched off the next door brick building of Hayden & Lewis, dealers in harness, carriage fittings and similar leather goo The Hayden & Lewis building was as large as Newmark Also igniting were at least four other structures, including rear of the Lanfranco Building and the First National Ba Building on Main Street.

Directing firefighting from the wagon hose bed, Strohm once ordered the 4-4-4 signal, or fourth alarm. This gene alarm called out at least seven of the LAFD's most power steamers, plus other apparatus including Hook and Ladders and B, chemical engines and hose wagons. The alarm clang into all fire stations. Other companies began moving into t downtown district to take up positions in vacant firehous while spreading protection resources in the city.

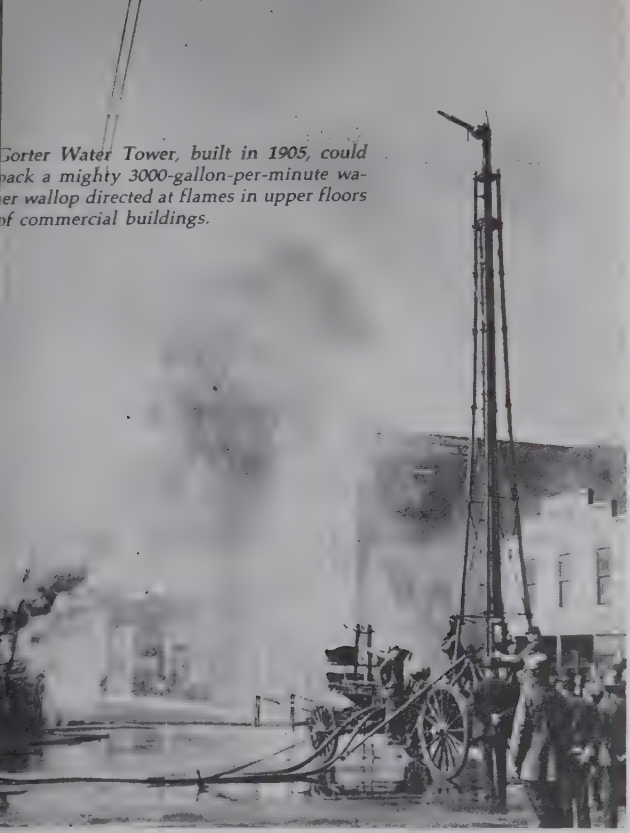
Strohm ordered Babcock Truck B to raise its 85-foot aer and firefighters began to operate a stream from the end of t ladder. The fire marks two apparent firsts in LAFD histo The first recorded use of move-ups at a large fire and, second the first-known time an aerial ladder pipe was used. Probab the pipe, or nozzle, was held by a firefighter standing on uppermost rung of the aerial ladder.

The $250,000 Newmark-Hayden & Lewis disaster is furth footnoted in fire department history. The fire gave Strohm ideal opportunity to reiterate his longstanding recommend tion for acquisition of a water tower which could deliver elevated stream to bore into flames engulfing upper stories buildings.

While the Newmark-Hayden fire was still burning, Stroh told newsmen, "We need a water tower and have needed o for years. If we had one this morning that fire would nev have spread beyond the Newmark store. We have room f such a machine at the Aliso Street engine house and we cou keep it there for big fires in the wholesale district. With such piece of apparatus we could direct six streams through o



Three Percheron horses pulled the heavy steel water tower built by Henry H. Gorter. The 65-foot telescoping tower was raised by water pressure supplied by fire engines.



Gorter Water Tower, built in 1905, could pack a mighty 3000-gallon-per-minute wa- er wallop directed at flames in upper floors of commercial buildings.

zzle and thus throw a stream equal to that of a fireboat. No e could live under such a deluge of water and the spread of e flames would have been impossible . . . There are estab- hments on Los Angeles Street where a water tower might be ed at any fire and some of these days we are going to have a e which we cannot control, only because we cannot direct a ge enough stream of water into the heart of the fire." ohm, as he had in the past, urged the downtown business mmunity to ante up funds for a water tower, but was ig- red.

Water towers were a direct result of the Great Chicago Fire of 71, when two scissors-like contraptions raised a caged plat- rm to heights of around 84 feet. From that vantage point, efighters operated a hose line supplied by engines. These se elevators were unwieldy, dangerous to operate and inef- ctive. The Chicago conflagration nevertheless demonstrated e need for a practical and effective means of elevating reams to fight fires in tall downtown buildings; even in ose structures protected by interior standpipe and sprinkler stems.

The first practical water tower was invented by two Balti- ore brothers, Abner and Albert Greenleaf, who operated a ckel plating works. Together with their machinist, John B. ogan, they patented on November 11, 1876, their Portable and Pipe or Water Tower. Mounted on a wagon, the tower nsisted of three pipes which, when connected, formed a 50- ot tower with a large nozzle at the top. The tower, supplied steamers pumping into the rig's water inlets, was raised by o hand cranks and the nozzle swiveled by means of a gear stem. The stream was directed by a rope held by a firefighter anding in the street.

The Fire Department of New York acquired the first tower d 20 other cities soon bought them as makers adapted the reenleaf and Logan idea. Ultimately, most makers sold their tents to American LaFrance and Seagrave which became eeminent as makers of water towers in addition to their gular pumper, chemical rig and hook and ladder lines. Los ngeles did not get its first tower until a quarter of a century ter they became commonplace in other cities. Part of the explanation was the lack of a genuine need for elevated master streams in Los Angeles until around 1900 when downtown buildings were as tall as 12 stories.

For its first tower, Los Angeles turned once again to San Francisco for advice. Capt. Henry J. Gorter, the master mechanic and superintendent of steamers for the San Francisco Fire Department, had developed a one-of-a-kind water tower that was raised by means of water pressure. The Bay City had three of them. Gorter built only about eight because freight costs and competition from eastern makers precluded him from selling towers to other than Pacific Coast departments.

Los Angeles opted for a Gorter with a 65-foot telescoping tower, largely because Strohm and Kuhrts had gone to San Francisco and were impressed as much by Gorter as they were by his towers when they saw them operate. Gorter took a leave of absence and came to Los Angeles with castings and patterns for the tower which he would build, at a cost of $5700, in the small LAFD machine shop behind Engine 4's station, 227 Aliso Street.

On March 1, 1905, 19 days before Gorter started construction, the fire commission's creation of the position of superintendent of machines and engines became effective and Gorter accepted the job at $120 a month; slightly less than half the chief engineer's salary. It is doubtful that money persuaded Gorter to leave his prestigious San Francisco Fire Department position. What is without doubt was San Francisco's displeasure that Strohm, Kuhrts and the fire commission had proselytized one of the foremost apparatus authorities in the United States.

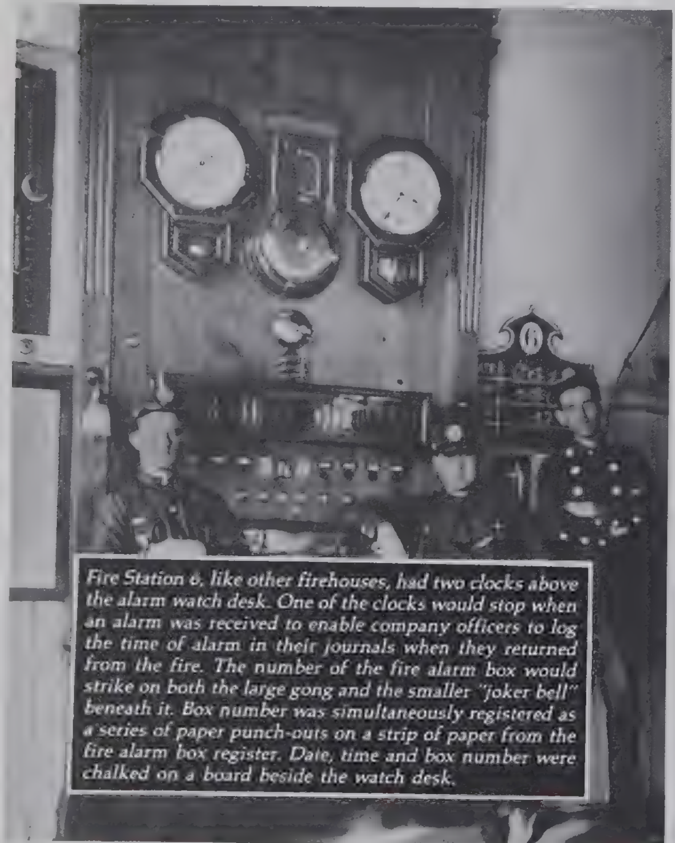
Gorter Water Tower arrives at downtown fire and will shortly join the battle.

LAFD PHOTO

With his ever-present cigar stub jutting from the side of his mouth and threatening to singe his black mustache, Strohm beamed happily, March 20, as he watched Gorter start work on the tower with the help of Engineer Walter Lips while Engine 4's captain, Archie J. Eley, observed. Strohm mentioned to Lips and Eley, both of whom would become chief engineers, that this day marked his 28th anniversary as a member of the Los Angeles volunteer and paid departments. Strohm's service injuries had left him nearly deaf in his left ear and his right ankle permanently disabled. Still another fireground injury, shortly after he returned to duty from the ladder fall, had torn muscles in his right arm. He was in almost constant pain. If anybody qualified for a pension, it was Strohm, who turned aside all suggestions of retirement.

Strohm still had plans and goals to meet. The water tower needed to be seen through to completion and he was eagerly looking forward to using it. He was also actively lobbying the fire commission and council for a new drill tower to replace the 1887 wooden tower at First and Hill Streets. Firefighters, he said, had to have better training, especially in the use of ladders, roof and fire escape operations. They must be prepared for the inevitable fires he knew would occur in downtown buildings. There were, moreover, additional stations to open, including apparatus to be bought for the new Fire Station 17 at 2100 East Seventh Street.

Strohm had done much to improve fire alarm communications, notably budgeting for dozens of additional alarm boxes, but much more needed to be done. The batteries and other equipment that operated the box alarm and associated telegraph system were located in the basement of the old City Hall on Broadway. It was a firetrap, Strohm warned. A major blaze could knock out the city's entire fire alarm system. Starting on December 28, 1901, the privately-owned Sunset Telephone and Telegraph Company completed a fire alarm connection to Engine 3, the new LAFD headquarters station at 217 South Hill Street which was opened that year. Telephoned alarms were directly put through to the headquarters switchboard where operators then notified the appropriate fire companies to respond.


Fire Station 6, like other firehouses, had two clocks above the alarm watch desk. One of the clocks would stop when an alarm was received to enable company officers to log the time of alarm in their journals when they returned from the fire. The number of the fire alarm box would strike on both the large gong and the smaller "joker bell" beneath it. Box number was simultaneously registered as a series of paper punch-outs on a strip of paper from the fire alarm box register. Date, time and box number were chalked on a board beside the watch desk.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE LATE FRED ALLEN

With nearly 30 years on the job, Strohm was looking forward to many more. It was not to be. Strohm, of course, supported his old friend, Meredith Snyder, in his bid for reelection as mayor. Owen C. McAleer's 1904 victory turned into one of the ugliest chapters in Los Angeles' political history. Targeting Strohm, the new mayor called for the chief engineer's resignation.

When Strohm refused to quit, McAleer said the chief engineer would be fired. The mayor hinted he had evidence to support Strohm's dismissal. When pressed for a bill of particulars that would substantiate the discharge of Strohm, the r or backpedaled and produced none.

Meanwhile, Los Angeles newspapers, the Merchants Manufacturers Association representing the downtown b ness establishment, prominent community leaders, the (ernment League and insurance underwriters unified in t support of Strohm and urged McAleer to reconsider. But major was adamant, even as women of the Seventh War which Strohm lived, circulated petitions calling upon McA to retain the chief engineer.

The ***Los Angeles Record,*** in a front page editorial, said Strohm's "management of the department has been such the property owners of the city are inspired with confidenc him; fire insurance companies have given notice that insura rates are lower under Chief Strohm's administration . . . C Strohm alone was able to conduct his department on the m ey allowance made by the council for the year. Better still, fire department fund showed a surplus, whereas other dep ment funds were overdrawn . . . But Chief Strohm has gi political offense. He is a Republican, but . . . made no effor conceal he was working for the re-election of former Ma Snyder, the unsuccessful Democratic candidate."

Among Strohm's strongest supporters was Commissio Kuhrts who issued a public statement which was also fr paged: "When I was chief and I wanted a boy for a place required courage, a cool head and implicit obedience to ord I called on Tommy Strohm . . . I have watched him ever si His record is the best. There has been no scandal in his ca no charges against him. It is all on the credit side of the led . . . Strohm is a born firefighter. He knows how to handle r and he does not know what the word fear is . . .

"He never sends men where he would not go himself. L at the small list on the relief rolls. A chief who stands as looking on and directing his men from what he can see fr the outside, will not compare with the man who investig for himself. Strohm had always been the first to enter buildings. He always found out for himself what had to done and then did it," said Kuhrts who, himself, was remo by McAleer and his commission spot filled with a may friend.

From City Hall, meanwhile, word leaked that Strohm's s cessor would either be Capt. T. D. McDonald of Engine 11 Engineer Walter Lips of Water Tower 1. Both candidates w opposed by the Pacific Coast insurance underwriters both protest against McAleer's vendetta against Strohm and wh citing the lack of experience of both candidates.

Ignoring unprecedented business and public outrage, M leer, along with his hand-picked fire commissioners, went i executive session on February 23, 1905, in the mayor's off Outside, a huge crowd of firefighters, business leaders others supporting Strohm, waited. Strohm asked them no stay. "There is no use," he said. "The deal has been made nothing that you can do will help matters." They stayed nev theless.

At noon, McAleer emerged from his office and read a ty written statement which said Strohm was being fired "for good of the fire department." Strohm's dismissal was to come effective March 1, 1905, at which time he would be reti on a pension. While Strohm certainly qualified for a pensi McAleer was not finished with the chief engineer. It would a long time before Strohm was pensioned.

The mayor and the commissioners, acting in their dual r as the fire pension board, took advantage of legal technicalit to stall Strohm's pension. Each time the matter came up consideration, Strohm was required to personally appear at meeting after making the long trip from Murietta Sprir where he had gone to seek surcease from his constant p resulting from his line of duty injuries.

Walter Lips was appointed chief engineer on March 1, 1905, and served until March 24, 1910

nally pensioned, Strohm left Los Angeles and found work construction engineer on the Owens River Aqueduct pro- In the short span of only a few weeks, Strohm and Kuhrts, wo men who had at least as much and probably more to do the successful growth of the fire department to which had devoted a generation of loyal service, were stripped of further progress they could and wanted to achieve.

he same day Strohm was fired, the mayor announced that would be the new chief engineer, effective March 1, 1905. joined the LAFD ten years earlier as a callman, February 895, and was subsequently promoted to tillerman and engi- r. It is not known what, if any, political ties he had to Aleer, but it has to be assumed that the mayor had cause to ect loyalty from Lips.

fter McAleer's announcement, Lips made a brief statement: hall endeavor to give the department and the city the best most businesslike administration possible . . . I have been eman since I was 15 years old and am a qualifed engineer. I assigned first to Engine No. 11 and from there to Engine 4, and last to the water tower in order to study and master t new machine. As to any changes which I may recommend, ave not considered any such matters. All I want is the good the department and the city."

During his brief five-year tenure, Lips would most be re- mbered as the chief engineer who started to bring the LAFD of the horse-drawn era and into the motorized age. What is st remembered is that those five years were not to be the ppiest of Lips' life. Most of his problems, which began nost immediately after he took office, were not of his own ing, but largely reflected the obvious demoralization within department as the result of Strohm's political lynching. hat Lips obviously lacked in firefighting leadership and ministration, he made up for by showing great common nse in carrying Strohm's programs forward.

Lips' first official function, five days after he took office, was observe final testing and acceptance of the Gorter tower on e afternoon of March 5, 1905. Three steamers, drafting from e Los Angeles Light Company reservoir at Fifth and Alameda reets, built steam pressures to 80 pounds and began supply- g two lines of two-and-one-half-inch hose to the tower's otor to raise the 40-foot main mast of the Gorter to a vertical position. The pressure was then used to extend the 25-foot telescoping mast to the Gorter's full 65-foot height. Only 40 seconds were required to raise the tower from its near horizontal bed to its full height. Water pressure similarly adjusted the tower to any desired lower height.

With a total of six lines feeding the Gorter, it produced a 3000 gallon-per-minute stream through the four-inch (some reports say two-inch) nozzle. The test was a resounding success and was marred only by the absence of Strohm and Kuhrts. With Water Tower 1 immediately in service at the Aliso Street station of Engine 4, the LAFD shortly thereafter changed the names of its four truck companies. Evidence that Water Tower 1 was considered a hybrid ladder company was shown when the department dropped the alphabetic numbering system. The Hayes Truck A became Truck 2, the Babcock 65-foot aerial became Truck 3 and the city service rigs became Trucks 4 and 5.

The Gorter tower got its fireground baptism on the night of November 24, 1905, after Jack Smiley, a well-known local baseball player, saw flames inside the two-story brick London Clothing House, more familiarly-known as the Harris & Frank store at the southwest corner of Spring and Franklin (Court) Streets. Smiley pulled the corner Firebox No. 37 at 9:50 p.m. Lips quickly arrived and within 15 minutes pulled a second, third and fourth alarm. This general alarm brought 13 engines, three hook and ladders, three hose wagons and the water tower.

Flames soon broke through the Harris & Frank roof and created what was described as a volcano of sparks and firebrands which landed on rooftops of nearby commercial buildings of similar size. Sparks rained on the horses which, true to their training, shrugged them off. The enormous glare, combined with the clanging of apparatus answering the four alarmer, attracted one of the largest crowds and created some of the worst traffic congestion ever seen at a downtown fire. Apparatus was delayed and hoseline laying was consequently hampered.

LAFD PHOTO

It looks like a cannon, but it is really the Gorter Water Tower decked out in a floral display for a parade.

Despite these handicaps, Lips was to be criticized for what was claimed to be a 15-minute delay in getting an effective stream into action, for not laddering nearby buildings and stretching lines to rooftops to protect exposures and for not putting the water tower into action immediately. Some idea of the spectacle created by the first use of the water tower in Los Angeles was provided by this ***Los Angeles Times'*** melodramatic account which said the Gorter "had been reclining in the

FROM THE COLLECTION OF RODGER EMBURY

The first use of the Gorter Water Tower at the Harris & Frank store fire at Spring and Franklin (Court) Streets on November 24, 1905, created a spectacle which led the Los Angeles Times *to report the tower "had been reclining in the middle of the street like a blase old dragon . . . haggard . . . gaunt-looking, almost lifelike. It unwound its folds and with a stretch and a roar spat into the flame with an effect as dramatic as any scene in a play . . ."*

middle of the street like a blase old dragon. It's a haggard, gaunt-looking, almost lifelike creature.

"It unwound its folds and with a stretch and a roar spat into the flame with an effect as dramatic as any scene in a play . . . In the strange, strained glare the steel on the big brute began to glint; there was motion. It teetered slowly . . . like a giant crane until at last a skeleton frame stood erect. A great silence fell over the crowd . . . On the long, gaunt neck was a head like that of an ostrich, a gleaming, sardonic, brassy head; ducked contentedly down between its shoulders.

"Slowly and spitefully the thing turned its ostrich head until it peered curiously down into the midst of the tangled, twisting, licking flames. Something there seemed to anger it. From the creature's innards came a huge growl, a gutteral roar, followed by a hiss and a spit, and it was all over with this free show. That water tower ate up the flames into its ostrich stomach so greedily that the stock below couldn't supply the menu. In half an hour after it first reared its stately neck, the clang of the bells and the clatter of horses' feet announced that the wagons were being withdrawn and were going home." By 11 o'clock, Lips declared the fire under control. Damage exceeded $250,000; much of it caused by the thousands of gallons of water gushing from the Gorter.

Gorter never built another tower. There are several explanations. Water towers were not as often used in Los Angeles as they were in other cities, notably New York which had 15 of them. Most of all, water towers were not a panacea for major fires in upper stories of commercial buildings and had many drawbacks. Their nozzles, operated from the ground, were not effectively controllable. Because of the angle of penetration, the water streams often hit ceilings, broke up and therefore did not bore into the seat of the fire. Water towers, moreover, maximized the potential for severe water damage.

As the LAFD and other departments found, sometimes with fatal results, the heavy volumes of water from towers and other streams could severely overload upper floors, especially in buildings containing baled goods such as cotton and paper. The frequent result was structural collapse with attendant loss of firefighters' lives. By the time American LaFrance made the last water tower ever built in the United States and sold it to Los Angeles in 1937, water towers were being attritioned f the fire service in favor of ladder pipe or other master stre as well as interior attack with hand-held lines combined standpipe and sprinkler systems.

Shortly after the Harris & Frank fire, R. B. Wilson, insurance adjustor for the Pacific Coast Underwriters, with support of the Merchants and Manufacturers Associat publicly criticized Lips' handling of the blaze which, said son, resulted in much unnecessary water damage. The commission asked Wilson to formally present his charge the board and a hearing date was calendared. Barely had controversy surfaced, when another flared.

At 1:45 a.m., December 4, 1905, flames spread through Hotel Coronado, a converted mansion catering to wealthy t ists, at 667 Coronado Street near Wilshire Boulevard. Al guests had fled by the time the first companies arrived a second alarm was called. Lips found that despite the effort Engines 11 and 13, Combination Chemical and Hose Comp 2 and Truck 5, the hotel was beyond saving. Sparks setting vicinity fires and Lips pulled a third alarm which ca Engines 6, 8 and Chemical 1. Lips put building and cont losses in the destroyed Coronado at up to $90,000.

Miss Helen Matthewson, co-leasor of the Coronado, wh dog suffocated in the fire, said Hose 2, the first company on scene did not arrive until at least 40 minutes after she phoned the fire department. She said the rig carried on short length of hose. Engine 11, the next-arriving comp had no steam raised in its boilers, said Miss Matthewson. further claimed that the driver raced the horses up and d Wilshire Boulevard while yelling, "Where in the hell is the plug?"

Lips' investigation brought out a somewhat different sion. Guests had fought the fire with a garden hose f considerable time before Miss Matthewson tried to call the department. Her phone lines were by then burned. She ra nearby mansions to awaken neighbors. Their phones dead, too. A fire alarm box was only a block away, but nob thought to pull it. Lips determined that the delayed notif tion was not received at the headquarters switchboard 2:10 a.m.

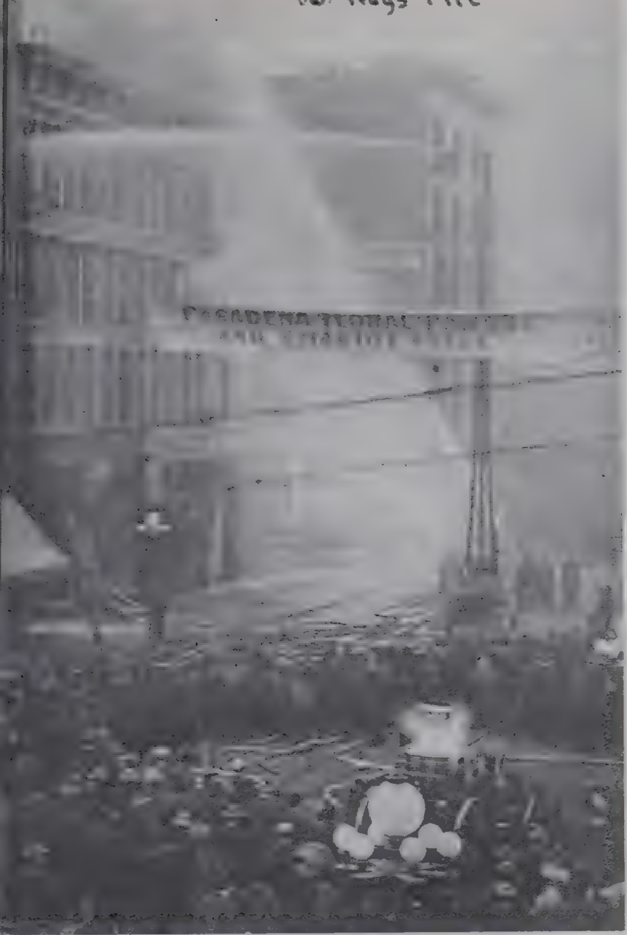
Around eight minutes later, Captain McDonald of Engin called for additional companies: proof, said Lips, that the partment was not derelict in its response. Hose 2 had normal equipment, including hundreds of feet of hose. reason Engine 11 was without sufficient pumping pres was explainable by the fact that it was located only a blocks from the Coronado. In that short time the engin could not raise enough steam pressure.

On December 24, Miss Matthewson nevertheless file complaint with the fire commission charging Lips with inc petence. Confronted by two complains, both of which were for a December 30, hearing before the fire commission, retained a famous criminal lawyer, Earl Rogers, to defend h Lips, of course had no way of knowing, on that day bef Christmas, that new charges of dereliction of duty would face in a matter of hours.

After 6:45 the following morning, Christmas Day, 190 fire in the four-story Van Nuys Broadway Hotel, 416 S Broadway, provided a forewarning of future hotel disaster Los Angeles. The brick exterior of the hotel masked the that the interior was almost completely of wood; much heavily-coated with varnish and paint. The Van Nuys Bro way Hotel scenario was one that would be repeated time time again in Los Angeles, sometimes with catastrophic sults, until city officials heeded fire department pleas for re active laws requiring built-in fire safety.

The Christmas morning fire started in the basement quickly spread up an elevator shaft and open stairways.

Van Nuys Fire



e Van Nuys Broadway Hotel, 416 South Broadway, burned twice. The first e on Christmas morning, 1905, and again three years later on Christmas Eve, 08. While no lives were lost in either blaze, the fires were a portent of future el fire disasters in Los Angeles.

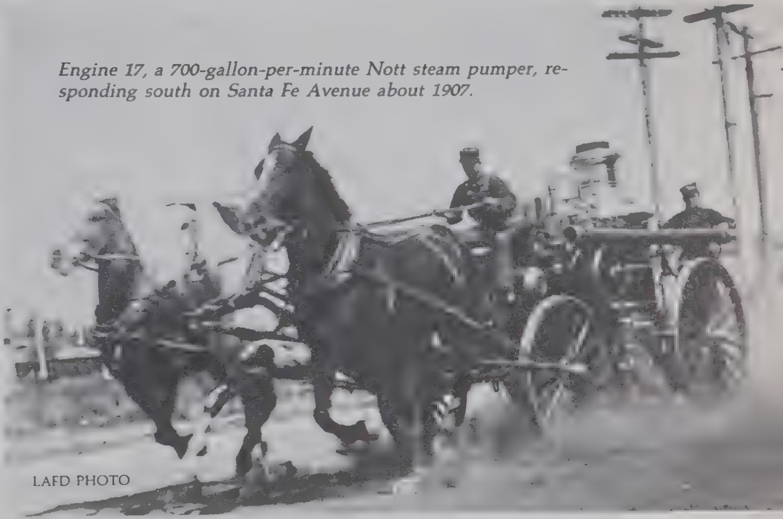
d thick, toxic smoke mushroomed along fourth floor corri- rs and banked down to lower floors. Judging from the full- volvement of the hotel as Lips and firefighters found it upon eir arrival, there was little doubt that employees had fought e fire for a considerable time before turning in the alarm ien the flames were beyond stopping.

Smoke was pouring from all windows on upper floors. hile truckmen laddered the building and began rescuing ests, other firefighters rushed inside and began pulling out ople trapped in their rooms. Lips quickly snapped in a gen- l alarm. Engine 16, responding from its 139 North Hope eet quarters, lost its brakes while coming down the First eet hill. The driver had no choice but to let the horses go o a full gallop to prevent the heavy Nott steamer from errunning them.

Engine 16 firefighters clung to the rig while fervently hop- g the horses would not stumble and fall. If that occurred, rses, steamer and firefighters would tumble end-over-end wn the hill in an undoubtedly fatal crash. The horses' cork oes helped as the runaway rig slithered wildly down First reet. Fortunately, the hill leveled at Main Street. The driver ned the horses to a momentary stop before cracking the ip, snapping the reins and Engine 16 continued to the fire. e Nott subsequently became the first LAFD rig to be uipped with front and rear brakes which could be operated the driver from his seatbox or the engineer riding on the al bed.

The lumber-yard-like interior of the hotel meanwhile con- ued to fuel the flames which, within 30 minutes after the st alarm, broke through the roof. The Gorter was spotted on Broadway, directly in front of the building, and its tower fully-extended. Steamers fed it a 3000-gallon-per-minute stream which bored through shattered windows. But the Gorter's powerful punch could not prevent extension of the flames to adjoining buildings which were soon engulfed: the Van Nuys Broadway Cafe, the California Wallpaper Company and the Cass-Demerel Hardware Company. The deluge cascading from the Gorter further weakened the burned flooring which collapsed. Six firefighters were seriously injured.

After the floor collapse, Lips ordered all firefighters out of the building until the fire was knocked down and overhauling of the ruins could start. Firefighters recovered thousands of dollars worth of jewelry and other valuables in guests' rooms and turned them over to police officers who took them to their headquarters for safekeeping until reclaimed. The four burned-out buildings were still smoking with losses totaling $339,000 when H. D. Clark, owner of the hotel, charged Lips and the firefighters with ineffectively fighting the fire. The building was brick and therefore fireproof, he said. The building was a firetrap, retorted Lips.



Engine 17, a 700-gallon-per-minute Nott steam pumper, responding south on Santa Fe Avenue about 1907.

LAFD PHOTO

Later that day, Lips and his firefighters wearily returned to their stations. They were satisfied they had performed a Christmas Day miracle because not a single life was lost in a fully-involved building where fatalities could have numbered in the dozens. Three days later, however, the ***Los Angeles Record,*** a frequent critic of Lips and the LAFD, charged that firefighters were seen looting hotel rooms of wallets and jewelry during overhaul operations.

With less than 10 months on the job as chief engineer, Lips undoubtedly wondered whether the worst charges ever made against a chief and the LAFD would cost him his job. As the date set for the commission investigation into the Harris & Frank, Coronado and Van Nuys Broadway hotel fires approached, Mayor McAleer added fuel to the imbroglio.

McAleer announced that complaints against Lips and the department stemmed from the mayor's political enemies and "disgruntled corruptionists who no longer could buy off the mayor or the fire commission. I, as mayor of Los Angeles, have been shown $80,000 a year if I would do certain things and there is not a member of this board (of fire commissioners) who has not been offered bribes." Bribery was not the issue in any of the controversial fires. An examination of contemporary records leaves little doubt, however, that Lips was being made the scapegoat for the shabby treatment of Strohm with whom he was frequently compared — unfavorably — in the ***Los Angeles Record.***

What was shaping up as a scandal without parallel in the

LAFD ended anticlimatically, December 30, when neither Miss Matthewson nor Adjuster Wilson showed up to testify as scheduled. The commission exonerated Lips of all charges regarding the Harris & Frank and Coronado fires. Short shrift was given to the complaints concerning the Van Nuys Broadway Hotel fire. The commissioners agreed that incident was a miracle, not a debacle. Nothing was said about the claims of thefts by firefighters. They remained resentful that they had not been given an opportunity to disprove the charges.

Whatever the roots of Lips' problems during his first year in office, the ***Los Angeles Times*** provided significant insight in a January 1, 1906, article: "Recent events have shown that five out of every ten persons are ready to criticize the firemen whether there is anything to criticize or not. No wonder the firefighters have been so prominently before the public during the past two months; for during that period all previous records for big fires, for numbers of alarms and for losses were broken. The 91 alarms during . . . November made a new record; being the greatest number of alarms during any 30 days of the fire department's history." That record, said the editorial, was broken with 104 alarms in December.

"The size of the city (and) the area to be protected (is) so large that the present equipment is, according to the opinion of insurance experts, about two thirds of what it should be," said the ***Times.*** "The experts believe the department should be increased by one-half . . . With all the fine equipment, the department is deficient in men. Engine companies which, in eastern cities, consist of eight-to-10 men are limited to five-to-six (in Los Angeles). Not one of the engine companies in the outlying districts can lay two lines of hose and have men sufficient to hold both nozzles . . . when one of the modern high-class engines gets to working at anything like its full capacity."

Noting that new equipment was about to be acquired and new men hired, the article ended on an optimistic note: "With these additions, the fire department will consist of 19 engine companies, four trucks, two chemical companies, three hose companies and one water tower, with two steamers in reserve. These companies will consist of 203 men."

Concurrent with that growth came greater concern for the welfare of firefighters and their families with the formation that year of the Los Angeles Firemen's Relief Association and the Los Angeles Firemen's Benevolent Association. On August 22, 1918, the Benevolent Association was chartered as Local 112 of the International Association of Firefighters (AFL) and became known by the LAFD's centennial year as the United Fire Fighters of Los Angeles City.

The Los Angeles Firemen's Relief Association traced its history to the January 21, 1886, Rules and Regulations of the LAFD which provided for a fireman's fund to help needy firefighters through gifts, benefit dances, baseball games, fines and other sources. In 1906, the firefighters opted to administer the fund themselves. Articles of incorporation were drawn by firefighters meeting at Engine 3 headquarters station on December 3, 1906. Formally approved by the fire commission and chartered by the State of California, the Relief Association held its first meeting, December 29, 1906, with representatives from 19 fire companies claiming department-wide membership of 156. Dues were $1-a-month per member. The Relief Association initially offered a $10 weekly sick benefit for up to 13 weeks and $150 for funeral expenses upon the death of a firefighter.

On December 30, the day following that first Relief Association meeting, Firefighter Adolph Hermanson of Engine 10 was fatally injured while fighting a fire. He fell from a top floor window to the rear alley of the five-story brick building at 216-222 South Los Angeles Street, in the wholesale district. The fire, discovered around 9:15 p.m., by a night watchman, originated in the third floor occupancy of Cohn, Goldsmith
Company, dealers in woolen goods. A three-alarm assignme
of apparatus, including the Gorter tower, was unable to pr
vent flames from spreading up to the roof.

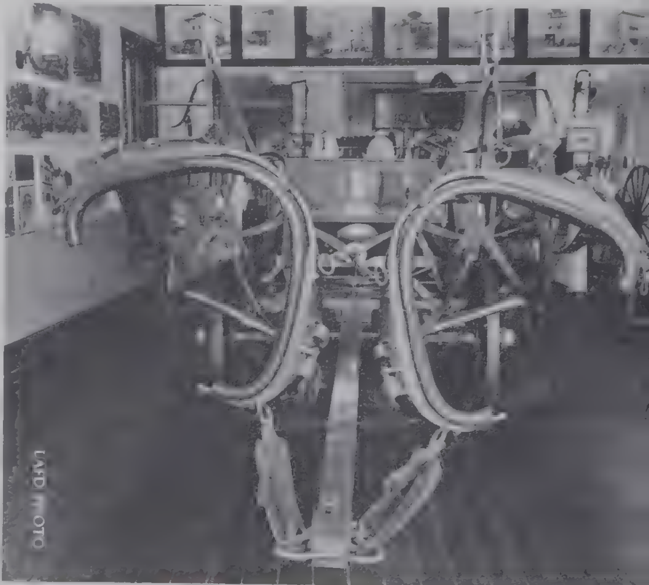
REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Firefighter Adolph Hermanson
Engine 10
Died in fall from window of a burning building
December 30, 1906

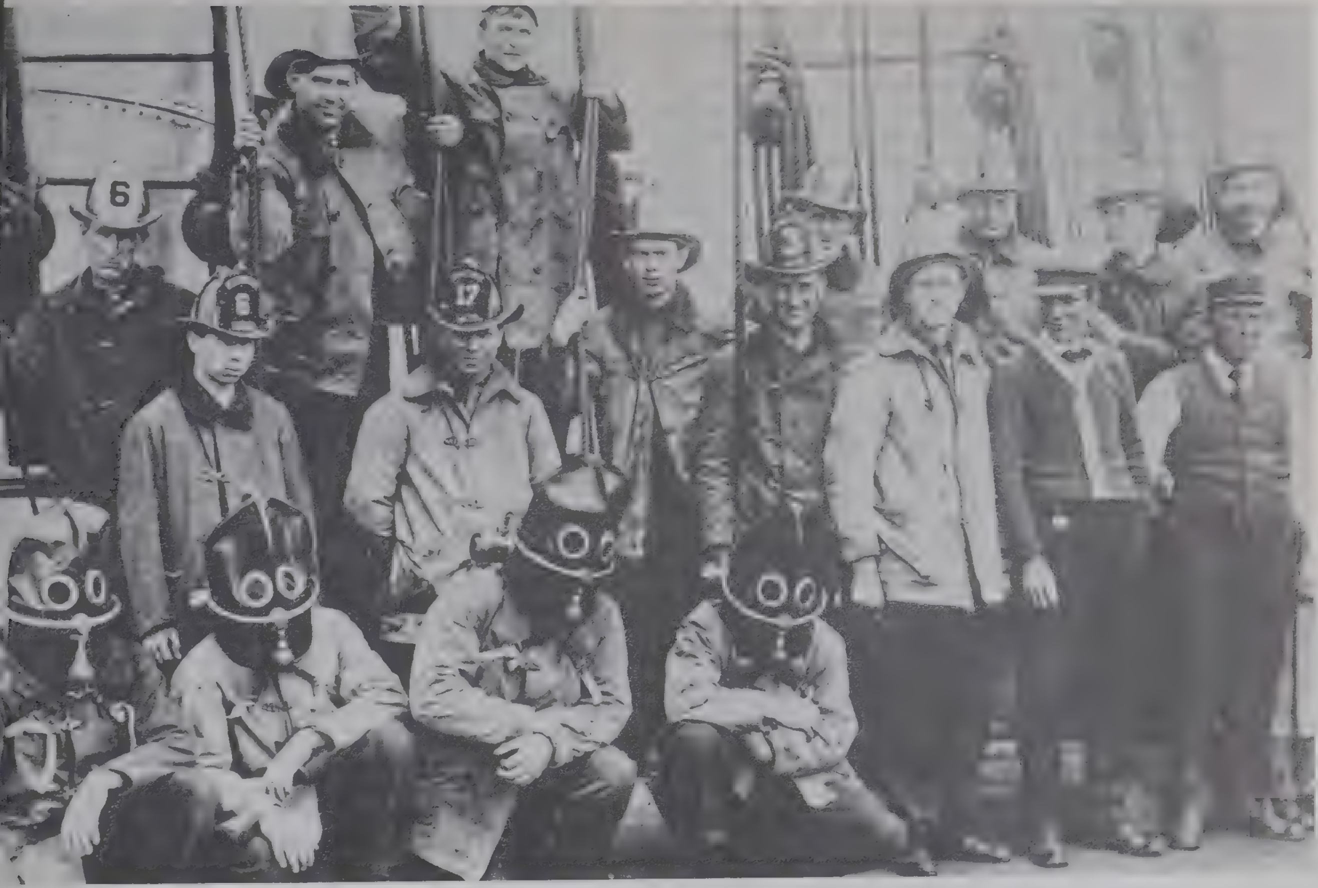
Assistant Chief O'Donnell said Hermanson was draggin
hose toward the rear of the fifth floor. Stepping backward,
tripped and fell through a window. Other accounts say H
manson was knocked out of the window when struck by a h
stream. Hermanson's bride of only a few weeks received t
Relief Association's first death benefit payment.

The LAFD shortly thereafter came close to losing ma
firefighters in a downtown office building blaze which ga
every indication of turning into a disastrous loss of life. T
fire could not have occurred at a worse time. Hundreds
workers had just returned from lunch to their labyrinth
small offices honeycombing the five upper floors of the s
story brick Germain Building, 334 South Spring Street. Lon
smoldering flames in the heavily-stocked storage basement
the Fair, a retail notions store on the first floor, quickly se
thick clouds of smoke and heat up the elevator shaft and op
stairways before spreading horizontally on all floors.

Testifying to the incredible propagation of the fire was t
thick smoke that first-arriving firefighters saw pouring fro
nearly every window on every floor as they answered the fi
alarm telephoned shortly after 1 p.m., February 28, 1907. Li
and other firefighters, quickly answering second and thi
alarms, were confronted with problems of severe complexi
which the LAFD rarely, if ever, had previously encounter
Dozens of people, framed by window smoke, were threateni
to jump. Corridors and stairways were too hot and smok
clogged for them to grope their way to doors leading to fi
escapes. Unseen, hundreds more were groping through smok
obscured hallways while searching for fire escapes or op
doors which could lead them to windows. Many were collap



Ceiling-suspended harness was dropped onto horses and quick-hitch w
completed by firefighters.



FROM THE COLLECTION OF BILL DAHLQUIST

Following the extremely smoky Germain Building fire, February 28, 1907, the LAFD began testing self-contained breathing apparatus.

g from smoke. As the basement fire worsened, so, too, did
e smoke.

Arriving truck companies quickly raised their aerial ladders
hile other firefighters put up every available hand-held lad-
r carried by the trucks and engine companies. Lips, himself
olding a nozzle, led firefighters as they tried to make an
terior attack by stretching their line through the front door
the Fair store. Smoke bulled them back out. Twice more they
ied to fight their way inside and both times they were driven
ut. Still more clouds of smoke came gushing from the base-
ent as Engine 9 firefighters opened a sidewalk door over a
eight elevator used to stock the basement. They started down
ladder, lost their footing, fell and were nearly overcome until
her firefighters rescued them. Engine 9's crew gulped in
esh air and twice more started down the ladder and both
mes were forced out by heat and smoke.

Recognizing the catastrophic loss of life that was imminent,
ngine and truck company firefighters tied wet sponges
ound their faces and plunged into the heat and smoke-filled
ilderness while crawling toward the coughing and gagging
ounds they heard from the smoke-befuddled victims. Dozens
f office workers were led to windows and brought down
dders. Firefighters carried many more unconscious office
orkers to ladders and fire escapes and handed them to other
refighters.

Rescuers were momentarily puzzled when they found John
. Brubaker, a mining engineer, overcome on the sixth floor.
rubaker weighed 300 pounds. Firefighters trussed him round-
nd-round with rope and lowered him 20 feet out a window to
refighters on the roof of the adjacent Newberry Building.

Other firefighters meanwhile chopped holes in the Fair store's flooring and stuck their nozzles into the basement and flooded the fire into submission. Against almost insurmountable odds, the LAFD once again prevented a catastrophe, although the fire cost the life of Emma Stewart, 28 a real estate stenographer who suffocated in her sixth floor office, perhaps before arrival of firefighters. Dozen of firefighters were themselves overcome or sickened by smoke for days. Smoke and fire damage exceeded $250,000.

Shortly after the Germain Building fire, Lips began testing self-contained breathing apparatus, starting April 3, 1907. Little is known of these tests, other than the first device studied consisted of an air-tight helmet which enabled a firefighter to stay in a smoke-filled room for 20 minutes. The helmet reportedly was of leather and resembled those used by deep-sea divers. A small tank of compressed air was attached to the back of the helmet.

Manufacturers at that time, and for many years to come, foresaw little market for breathing apparatus especially designed for the fire service. Available devices were adapations of devices primarily intended for deep-sea diving, underground mining, or by chemical and refrigeration industries, especially those utilizing ammonia. Three years after Lips' tests began, he demonstrated the department's first seven self-contained breathing apparatus units. They apparently were used, starting around October 22, 1910, and distributed among downtown fire companies.

Six of them were referred to as Servous smoke and ammonia helmets. A contemporary description said they consisted of "a leather helmet with mica eyeholes. At the back is a metallic reservoir which contains oxygen in a crystalized form and a water receptacle on top of the reservoir. Inside this helmet is a rubber mouthpiece, connected with the oxygen reservoir, and as soon as the wearer commences to breathe through the tube, the moisture from his breath starts the oxygen."

The lone Draeger oxygen and ammonia helmet was described as consisting of "a reservoir charged with oxygen, which flows through carbonate of potash to purify the same and is controlled by a valve easily reached by the wearer. There is also a rubber mask to place over the face, with the glass front; the same as a diver's headpiece, and this is connected to the oxygen reservoir by a flexible tube on each side of the body.

"When the mask is placed over the face, the rubber is inflated by means of a bulb which causes the mask to fit close to the face and there is also a sponge which works on a pivot by means of which the wearer can keep the glass front clear of moisture, if necessary, so that he can see clearly. There is also a rubber reservoir in front under the mask which takes care of the surplus oxygen. Each charge will last about one hour and the helmet has a gauge which shows the amount of charge." Lips must have been satisfied with these first pieces of LAFD self-contained breathing apparatus because he said he hoped to equip every firefighter with them.

Los Angeles started to seriously address its water problems after it bought out the privately-owned local water company, effective February 2, 1902. Superintendent and Chief Engineer William Mulholland of the Los Angeles Water Department soon came up with a visionary plan to build a 233-mile aqueduct which would bring Owens River water from its basin in the Sierra Nevada Mountains to Los Angeles. On May 16, 1907, fire commissioners voted their endorsement of citywide support of the aqueduct. Citizens, by a 10-to-1 vote, approved a $23 million bond issue the following June 12. Construction of the world's longest municipal aqueduct started October 1, 1908.

Lips meanwhile reminded fire commissioners the Owens River aqueduct was five years from completion. Welcome as that water would be, the city's fire protection could not wait that long for improvements. Lips noted that the city's 250,000 people lived and worked in a 29-square-mile sprawl. The department was answering more than three fire calls a day — sometimes in areas almost devoid of protection — and resulting in many runs, long runs and exhaustive runs for the horses, whose service life was therefore shortened.

Boyle Heights needed a new firehouse, said Lips. Highland Park had no aerial ladder truck protection. Mansions around 48th Street were totally without fire service. Enormous growth in the area around Seventh and Figueroa Streets required a firehouse (eventually Fire Station 28). Downtown fire protection called for at least two new 1100 gallon-per-minute steamers. These pumpers would further prove valuable when the Gorter water tower was needed. The bigger pumpers could supply the tower as well as its wagon battery with water currently provided by as many as four smaller steamers.

"From the Plaza to Ninth Street and from Hill and Alameda Streets, we need larger fire plugs. We now have two and one-half inch outlets whereas eastern cities and most coast cities, including Long Beach, use a four-inch outlet," said Lips. He reiterated Strohm's earlier pleas for a new fire alarm office to replace the old firetrap office in the City Hall basement on Broadway. Even at that, alarm circuits were overloaded and no more boxes could be added to the system. In all, Lips' list of needs included 10,000 feet of hose, 25 more horses, firehouses for five new engines and at least five hook and ladders.

Eventually, all of these improvements and more would be made; but not during Lips' time in office. The fire commission was more intrigued by horseless carriages. Many prominent citizens owned them and they had become more of a status symbol than of utilitarian value. On November 14, 1907, the fire commission voted to buy an eight-passenger, self-pro-

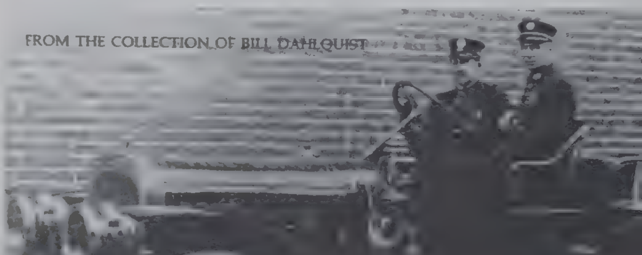
Firefighters take a trial ride in a self-propelled Locomobile that fire com
sioners voted to buy for use on inspection trips and other LAFD busine

pelled Locomobile for official use on inspection trips and ot
department business.

The heyday of the fire horses was far from over, even
more automobiles clogged Los Angles streets. The hor
seemed to regard their presence, sounds and smells as j
one more obstacle to be avoided while they hurried to alar
By 1915, the year the LAFD bought its last horses, Los Ange
County's 750,000 people would own 55,217 motor vehic
From that day forward, Los Angeles had the highest per cap
ownership of automobiles in the world. Not until 1923 wo
the LAFD become fully-motorized.

The LAFD got its second automobile less than a year la
when the fire commission authorized the $3300 purchase
Lips of a shiny red three-passenger, 60-horsepower Hay
roadster with a turtleback rumble seat. "We expect to do gr
things with this car," enthused Lips. "I can cover about th
times as much territory, keep in connection with all the s
tions and have my eye on the entire department.

"The automobile has been badly needed," said Lips. "It i
dangerous thing to take a horse . . . through the crowd
section of the business district. The animal knows he is expe
ed to cover ground and he does it regardless of obstacles. L
Angeles has grown so that the auto-apparatus has become
absolute necessity. An automobile can make almost five tim
the speed of the fastest horses in the department and can
stopped almost instantly to avoid collisions; where runni
horses would precipitate an accident. The auto is efficient



FROM THE COLLECTION OF BILL DAHLQUIST

Fire commissioners spent $3300 to provide Chief Engineer Walter Lips, sea
right, with this shiny red three-passenger, 60-horsepower Haynes roads
with a turtleback rumbleseat. It was the LAFD's first chief's car.

aving, where horses have to be driven at a trot to prevent ing."

pical of new car owners then as now, Lips could hardly to try out his Haynes. That opportunity came shortly e dawn, October 6, 1908, when Box 12, Broadway and First t, began clanging into headquarters Station 3. Lips prob- never made a faster turnout in his life. According to emporary accounts the box number was still tapping into tations when Lips arrived at the fire. The blaze caused $10 age.

ith downtown fires steadily increasing and water damage exceeding fire losses, Lips proposed that the insurance panies jointly form a Los Angeles salvage corps similar to e operated by underwriters in New York, Chicago, and r cities. These fire insurance patrols, operating out of rate stations and linked to the city's alarm system, an- ed all box and structure fire alarms in the high-value ict. The rigs carried water-resistant salvage covers and r removal equipment.

surance patrolmen usually went to the floor immediately er the fire floor and spread covers over valuables to protect nst water cascading from above. They used breaching tools other devices to open holes in walls while routing excess er out of the building. Theirs was not a glamorous job, but ly a dangerous one. Many patrolmen were killed when s, floors, and walls collapsed.

ps illustrated how insurance companies could benefit from s Angeles salvage corps when he noted that carriers collect- 1,500,000 a year in premiums from Angelenos and paid out es of $500,000, "thereby realizing a handsome profit of 00,000." Lips said the companies could save even more by blishing a salvage corps at an initial cost of $14,000, plus 0-a-year to maintain it. Insurance leaders were not enthu- tic. They said they were in the business of selling insur- e, not saving property. A salvage corps would lull down- n businessmen into a false sense of security. The business- would, consequently, decrease their coverage and the in- ance companies would lose money.

ouncilman Walter J. Wren, a fire insurance expert, sided h Lips. He said the companies declined more insurance s in Los Angeles than they were willing to accept. Wren d the salvage corps would result in great savings for insur- e companies and actually enable them to write more busi- s. With the endorsements of the fire commission, the Mer- nts and Manufacturers Association and the Los Angeles amber of Commerce, the proposal was sent, November 5, 6, to the Pacific Underwriters Association in San Francisco. eir reply: The matter would be referred to the board of ectors at its next meeting. The letter did not mention when t meeting would occur.

n the next years, Lips found still more convincing argu- nts for a salvage corps. At 2:03 p.m., November 15, 1908, an rm was sounded for a basement fire in the Sherman-Clark lding, retailers of pianos, phonograph records and players 314 West Fourth Street, between Hill Street and Broadway. e four-story brick building was better-known as the Los geles Pacific Railway Depot and Office Building. When st-alarm Engines 3, 4, 5, and 16, Truck 2 and the Gorter ver arrived, flames were rapidly spreading throughout the oot waiting room and into upper floors of the Knox Lodging use directly above.

Vhile Truck 2 raised its 85-footer to bring down four wom- employees, the water tower took its customary spot directly front of the building and soon had its wagon battery pound- a solid stream into the waiting room in an effort to check- te the upward spread. Lips responded on the second alarm 2:22 p.m., along with Engines 9, 10, and 19, and Truck 3 and se Companies 2 and 4.

The chief engineer was more concerned with the next door, eight-story brick Broadway Department Store at 318 West Fourth Street, which was almost certainly doomed. Smoke was already showing from its windows nearest the Sherman-Clark building. Lips sent his driver to Firebox 411 at Fourth and Hill Streets where he unlocked the faceplate and, using the telegraph key inside, tapped out the 3-3-3 signal, or third alarm, at 2:30 p.m., which brought Engines 7, 11, 17, Truck 4 and Hose 3.

The following three hours saw some of the most difficult firefighting the department had experienced in years. Fortunately, the Broadway had its own trained fire brigade of store personnel. They had around eight hose lines operating before second and third alarm firefighters relieved them. Some 800 employees and shoppers were evacuated by the Broadway's fire wardens, exactly according to the store's pre-fire planning.

From the standpoint of smoke problems, it was the nastiest worker since the Germain fire. Three firefighters were overcome and dragged outside. Lips ordered them back to their stations to recuperate. The revived firefighters refused to leave, crawled back inside the Broadway, picked up their hoseline and continued the fight.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF RODGER EMBURY

Wagon battery of Gorter Water Tower effectively penetrates waiting room of the four-story Los Angeles Pacific Railway Depot and Office Building which burned on November 15, 1908. Fire was prevented from spreading to the adjacent Broadway Department Store.

At last the Broadway was saved, although damage came to $150,000, mostly from water, too. "It was one of the most splendid firefighting feats which the department has accomplished in many years," reported the ***Los Angeles Examiner.*** While firefighters were picking up their hose, Lips went to each officer and firefighter and personally thanked them for their bravery and hard work for a job more than well done. Arthur Letts, the Broadway's proprietor, agreed. He sent a $100 check to the Los Angeles Firemen's Relief Association.

Less than two months later, Lips armed himself with more ammunition to prove the need for a salvage corps. Around 10 p.m., Christmas Eve, the Fifth Street and Broadway Firebox 411 was pulled again. History was repeating itself. The fire was in the old Van Nuys Broadway Building which burned on Christmas Day three years earlier. The four-story brick structure had been rebuilt — again with an almost completely wooden interior — and was as much of a firetrap in 1908 as it was in 1905.

The major difference this time was that the fire occurred when nobody was in the building and it started on the top floor, rather than the basement. Flames quickly invaded the attic and penetrated the roof. Lips positioned firefighters to check the spread to the nearby Broadway Department Store. They were successful, but not before thousands of gallons of water caused $50,000 damage to merchandise and caused the cancellation of the store's after-Christmas sale.

Thousands of Christmas Eve revelers were attracted by the glare over the downtown district: the clanging and clattering of apparatus and horses answering the three alarms. They watched and were enthralled by the flames stabbing from the top floor while casting eerie shadows over the smoke-belching steamers. The steamers' churning pistons, their flywheels spinning, shattering windows, shouted orders and sounds of the streams splattering the building were punctuated by pumper engineers who tugged at their boiler steam whistles to signal the coal wagon driver to bring more sacks of coal. Ignoring all of this, the fire horses, unhitched, as was customary practice at working fires, and covered with blankets after their long, sweaty runs, waited patiently at their hitching posts. The drivers had led them there after spotting the engines near the hydrants.

When the fire was controlled, Lips announced losses exceeding $250,000 and seized the occasion to say the major portion of the damage could have been avoided if there was a salvage corps. Pointing to the tens of thousands of gallons of water that had cascaded into first, second, and third floor commercial occupancies which otherwise escaped fire damage, plus the heavy water damage in the Broadway, Lips said, "If a fire insurance patrol had been on the job, they would have saved enough to have maintained the company for a year."

Going into 1909, the Pacific Board of Fire Underwriters continued to procrastinate, even as Los Angeles downtown business groups threatened to withhold part of their insurance premiums and use the money to start a salvage patrol themselves. It would be many years before Los Angeles had salvage companies. They would not be operated by the insurance underwriters which gradually disbanded them in every city, except New York, by 1986.

In 1923, the LAFD put in service its first salvage companies, both Stutz apparatus, at Fire Stations 16 and 28 and manned them with firefighters.

The LAFD became the first major fire department in the United States to operate its own fleet of salvage rigs located not only in the high-value downtown district, but throughout the city. Soon thereafter, the LAFD became as renowned for the efficiency of its salvage work, with resulting lower losses, as it was for firefighting and fire prevention. By the LAFD's centennial, the department, for budgetary and other reasons, no longer operated fully-manned salvage companies, except on special call. Salvage work is concurrently performed by truck and engine companies during fire suppression operations.

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Engineer Harry E. Buckingham
Engine 20
Died from overexertion and exposure
February 9, 1909

Early in 1909, the LAFD lost another firefighter when Engineer Harry E. Buckingham, 31, of Engine 20, died February 9, nine days after a not altogether unusual incident in that era. While responding to a small fire on the windy and rainy night of January 31, Engine 20 and its hose rig bogged down in mud.
Firefighters worked to the point of exhaustion during the
hour until they freed the apparatus. Buckingham shortly t
after collapsed and died of rheumatic fever and related co
cations. His was one of the first funerals arranged by th
Angeles Firemen's Relief Association.

Chemical Engine Company No. 7, a 1910 Seagrave carrying 1000-feet of h
60-gallon water tank and chemicals, was typical of the 26 combination ch
cal and hose rigs in the LAFD during the heyday of horses.

Los Angeles began to experience unprecedented geogra
cal growth. The LAFD was challenged by problems for w
it was totally unprepared starting August 28, 1909, with
annexation of the harbor area including San Pedro, Wilm
ton and East San Pedro (Terminal Island), and the Februa
1910, annexation of Hollywood which had been establishe
1887 by Protestants from Kansas who espoused prohibitio
liquor. The harbor included eight miles of waterfront to
without fireboat protection. The Panama Canal, five y
from completion, would hasten growth as the port becam
world's largest importer of lumber and, later, a major pe
chemical and cargo-handler. The Hollywood annexation
coincidental with the state of the ascendary of the area as
film-making capital of the world.

The harbor and Hollywood posed two distinctly diffe
fire protection problems: a rapidly-growing waterfront wit
myriad hazards and film studios with their barn-like so
stages and false-front scenery back-lots comparable to ver
lumber yards.

The annexations were, moreover, marked by two dist
ironies. The LAFD took over the harbor area volunteer
department consisting of hand-drawn and hand-operated
engines. Los Angeles probably was the only fire departm
that acquired hand-operated apparatus long after steam
engines had replaced them in every other large city and wh
themselves were beginning to be replaced by motorized
apparatus in the LAFD.

The department at the time of the annexations barely
enough equipment to meet the needs of its 250,000 citizens
more than 60 square miles of city territory. By February, 1
the LAFD had 27 steamers (five in reserve or undergoing
pair) the most it ever owned. Pumping capacities ranged f
450 gallons-per-minute to at least 1000. While the LAFD
deficient in truck companies with only seven (counting
Gorter tower) the roster had some of the finest apparatus m
by four of the nation's best manufacturers: Amoskeags f
Manchester, New Hampshire; Ahrens-Foxes from Cincinn

rican LaFrances from Elmira, New York and W. S. Nott
nes built in Minneapolis. That LAFD firepower did not
ude the steadily-growing fleet of around nine quick-attack
nical engine and hose companies.

though Lips hoped to acquire a fireboat, especially to
ect the sprawling lumber yards, budgetary constraints not
precluded that idea at the time, but harbor firefighters
ned their volunteer status until the 1920's. Chief John C.
of the San Pedro Volunteer Fire Department ultimately
me a LAFD captain and later a battalion chief assigned to
harbor.

ollywood's major fire protection asset at annexation time
a year-old motorized combination chemical and hose rig
sed in a former church at the southwest corner of Ca-
nga Boulevard and Selma Avenue. It was one of the first
line-powered fire engines on the Pacific Coast. The boxy,
t-wheel base rig was made by the Auto Vehicle Company
os Angeles and was referred to as a Tourist. That name
gests the engine was an adaptation of a touring sedan in the
orcar company's line. The Tourist's 50-horse-power gaso-
engine was mounted in a sheet metal hood enclosure
mbling a large, horizontal oil drum. The 6300-pound en-
e had 800 feet of hose on a reel, a 40-gallon chemical tank,
-mounted extension ladders and sufficient tail and running
rd space to carry up to eight volunteer firefighters.

ontemporary accounts indicate the firehouse floor was
ped upward from the door. When an alarm was received,
of two paid firefighters on duty kicked the wood blocks
ay from the wheels. As the Tourist rolled freely down the
ed floor, the driver switched on the ignition, thus saving
e by not having to hand-crank the motor. The LAFD re-
med the outfit Hose Company No. 7 and hired its captain,
Shill, and a driver. The others assigned to the station remained volunteers. Most of them were not much to the captain's liking. "The only thing I have against volunteers is that you can't boss 'em," said Captain Shill. "If they don't like the way you give your orders — and what's the use of being captain if you can't give orders — they tell you to go to the devil and do it yourself."

With a burgeoning city struggling to meet its fire protection needs . . . with the nightmarish prospects of inevitably large fires in the virtually defenseless waterfront and Hollywood areas . . . and with the motorized era in the offing, 1910, seemed like a bad time to get rid of the chief engineer. But that's exactly what happened in somewhat of a reprise of the Strohm affair, shortly after George Alexander was elected mayor on November 10, 1909.

The chasm between Mayor Alexander and Lips first surfaced publicly on January 3, 1910, when the mayor censured the chief engineer and accused him of insubordination after Lips' name appeared as the author of a letter in ***Fire and Water Engineering Magazine*** (predecessor of ***Fire Engineering***). The letter was critical of the Cregier fire alarm box system being tried experimentally in the area around the University of Southern California. Lips favored the better-known and proven Gamewell system. Alexander and his fire commission appointees supported the Cregier. The situation escalated with the report, denied by Lips, that a Gamewell official had ghostwritten the letter for the chief engineer.

From City Hall came the rumor that Lips was going to resign and had already accepted another job. Matters further heated when Lips admitted he had, without the commission's knowledge, escorted a prisoner to San Quentin for the Los Angeles County Sheriff. From there Lips had gone to San Francisco to attend a prize fight.

On March 23, 1910, the mayor and fire commissioners, with-

The LAFD's first complete fire alarm and telegraph system was housed in the basement of the old City Hall on Fort Street (Broadway) between First and Second Streets starting around the turn of the century. It was replaced by the Westlake Signal Office which opened on September 1, 1925.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF DOFEL J. BRUNETTI

Archibald J. Eley was appointed chief engineer on May 24, 1910, and served until July 17, 1919

LAFD PHOTO

out Lips attending, went into an all-day executive session. Assistant Chief O'Donnell was grilled about the buying and selling of fire horses. "Many of those horses have been purchased at prices greatly in excess of their true value and sold for much less than they were worth," claimed Fire Commissioner C. O. Hawley. The commission voted $250 to investigate what it referred to as Lips' mismanagement of the LAFD.

The investigation was not necessary. The next day Lips resigned, effective immediately and turned in his LAFD badge for that of a Los Angeles County deputy sheriff. Lips, chief engineer for five years, served as a deputy sheriff for 24 years before he retired. The day Lips quit, the commission appointed Battalion 2 Chief John G. Todd as interim chief for 60 days until a new chief engineer was named.

(While Todd was later serving as assistant chief, he was sitting outside Fire Station 3 on February 18, 1917, when a gunman under the influence of drugs and without provocation fired four shots at Todd. One bullet lodged in Todd's leg which was amputated at the knee. Rather than lose a valuable officer by a disability pension, the City Council created the position of third assistant chief and Todd was appointed to head the fire prevention bureau.)

O'Donnell was the obvious heir apparent. By then, the assistant chief's position was under civil service and O'Donnell said he was not interested in becoming chief because he did not wish to lose the civil service protection that the chief engineer's position would cost him. The candidates included Todd, Richard Shute, former chief of the San Diego Fire Department and a 45-year-old captain of Engine 4 who had been on sick leave and was expected to apply for a disability pension. In a most peculiar action, the commission nevertheless appointed him temporary battalion chief. On May 12, Temporary Battalion Chief Archibald J. Eley was named as the new chief engineer, effective May 24, 1910.

Within hours after Mayor Alexander's announcement, an even more puzzling incident — if only for its peculiar political timing — occurred when the widow of a LAFD employee filed charges against Eley with the fire commission. Mrs. Florence L. LeCount claimed that Eley had borrowed $200 from her husband; that he was $92.25 in arrears and had not mac payment in many months and ignored her requests to wipe the debt. The fire commission ordered Eley to clear up matter by the next commission meeting and he did.

The Lips and Strohm affairs must be put into the perspec of American municipal politics of that day and which, in s cities, continued through 1986. When a new mayor took of it was traditional in many cities that one of his first official was to replace the incumbent fire and police chiefs with t who supported his campaign. The deposed chiefs usually sufficient years of service to automatically retire. In the yo LAFD this was, of course, not possible; hence the acrimon was a system that could result in a chief, better or worse, his predecessor; but a system that certainly contributed — still contributes — toward hampering progressiveness in American fire service. A chief, whose tenure is largely dep dent upon the next mayoralty election, cannot hope to im ment long-term programs.

Eley, an 18-year veteran of the LAFD, forthrightly admi that City Hall friendships got him his job as callman, Ma 1892. Promoted to driver of Engine 3 that year, Eley went o become captain of Engine 4 for eight years until his tempo battalion chief appointment. Certainly he owed allegianc Mayor Alexander, but in his acceptance announcement indicated the high priorities he was going to place on be training, physical fitness, discipline and improving fire partment resources:

"I am a fireman, not a politician," said Eley. "The dep ment can't stand still. It must grow with the city and it m grow with the progress of firefighting. If the city will give equipment, I will answer for the efficiency of the men. Th get plenty of drilling . . . They'll have steady hands . . . It ticklish job when a man has to go up a high building wi scaling ladder or struggle with a twisting, writhing hose at top of a tall ladder, and if the man has not had a lot of drill it is no place for him."

Regardless of whatever political influence may have put

Two steam and sail-equipped harbor tugs, the Warrior *and th* Falcon, *were contracted for use as fireboats when needed.*

ffice, Eley proved to be one of the LAFD's best chief neers. Among his first accomplishments was contracting he use of two sail-equipped harbor steam tugs, the *Warrior* the *Falcon,* for use as fireboats when needed. Volunteers ld board them at the scene of fires. Lips also proposed nsion of the water main system in the harbor area. In his e 30, 1910, annual report, Lips recommended purchase of orized apparatus "where practical," although he had mis- ngs as to its value in every part of Los Angeles. In anticipa- of that equipment, construction began on the first fire- se especially built for motorized equipment: a two-story k building at 2475 West Washington Boulevard. It would se new Engine 26.

rom his predecessor's administration, Eley inherited the npletion of Fire Station 23 and the chagrin that went with it. e three-story station at 225 East Fifth Street in the heart of downtown warehouse, commercial, hotel and manufactur- district filled a definite need. Nobody questioned that. at was questioned was whether the city had to spend at st $53,000 to build it at a time when the department was ounging for funds to buy new apparatus and to provide lly-needed additional protection throughout the city.

he Italian marble-fronted exterior was only 26-feet-wide. e station extended 168-feet north to Winston Street which bled the apparatus to leave from the front door and return ough the back. The station was built to house a steam fire gine, a motorized 65-foot aerial ladder truck yet to be ught, a combination chemical and hose wagon and to serve the chief engineer's headquarters and home.

Ostentatious as it appeared from the outside, the interior enities in the apparatus room included hard-brick flooring, or-to-ceiling white tile, electric lighting fixtures, a pressed el ceiling, six fire poles and sheet metal stalls for 10 horses. aste traps in the stalls directly connected to the East Fifth eet sewer system. Chains across the stalls dropped electroni- lly with the first clang of the alarm bell.

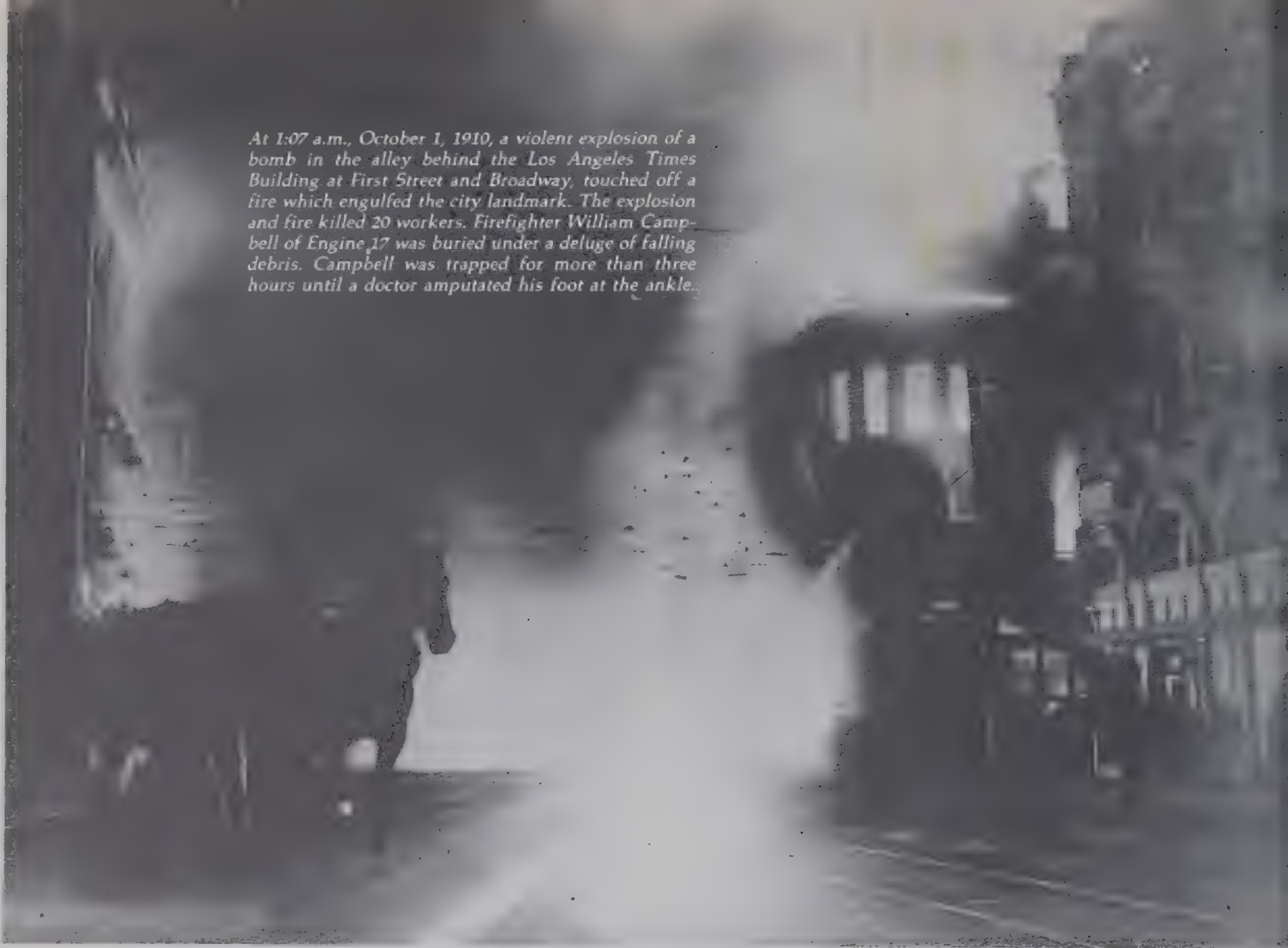
The second floor featured a private office for the captain, a rmitory with 20 white hospital beds, a recreation room for the firefighters, a library with built-in bookcases and leaded glass windows, plus a two-room suite with bath for visiting fire chiefs. The chief engineer's quarters on the third floor boasted an elegantly-appointed recreation reception room, a Vermont marble fireplace and mantel with a seven-foot-high mirror of beveled glass, a boudoir and a bathtub-for-two. There was a brass pole especially for the chief. It took him to the second floor and from there he slid another pole to the apparatus room.

When Fire Station 23 opened in 1910, the three-story building was considered to be among the most ornate in the United States. The firehouse boasted Italian marble, white tile and horse stall chains which electronically dropped with the first clang of the alarm bell. Upper floors included a library, recreation room and office and living quarters for the chief engineer.

Other elegances throughout the station included polished oak flooring, white oak woodwork and Peruvian mahogany wainscoting. Heat was provided from a basement boiler system which included a hose pre-connected to the steam fire engine, thus maintaining proper boiler pressure in the pumper. The coupling between the boiler and the engine automatically separated when the engine got a run.

Fire Station 23 had front and rear elevators, along with a staircase notable for its nickel-plated handrails. The front elevator was for use of the chief engineer and his family, the fire commission, visiting fire chiefs and guests. The back elevator was used to lift hay and other supplies to the third floor loft. The hay and other food was pushed down a metal chute leading to the first floor. A dumbwaiter brought up fresh bedding for the horses until it was needed. Since Fire Station 23 obviously was the LAFD's showcase house, two of the department's most famous horses would be transferred there: Searchlight, who seemed to instinctively know shortcuts while taking Eley to fires and Jerry The Fire Eater, who amused visitors by chomping burning cigar butts and grimacing.

Eley endured much fuss-and-feathers from the media as the station's completion and dedication neared. Feature articles dripping with sarcasm described the station as a marble palace: probably the most ornate in the United States, if not the whole world of firehouses. One reporter observed that it would be appropriately fitting for the captain to wear formal evening attire and that the firefighter standing floor watch be outfitted in royal knickerbockers to welcome visitors. Completed and dedicated in September, 1910, Eley's name was conspicuously absent from the large nameplate on the front of the building. Lips' was not. He must have derived a certain sense of satisfaction when he saw his name on the plate near that of his nemesis, Mayor Alexander. Fire Station 23 was scheduled to go into service on October 1, 1910.



At 1:07 a.m., October 1, 1910, a violent explosion of a bomb in the alley behind the Los Angeles Times Building at First Street and Broadway, touched off a fire which engulfed the city landmark. The explosion and fire killed 20 workers. Firefighter William Campbell of Engine 17 was buried under a deluge of falling debris. Campbell was trapped for more than three hours until a doctor amputated his foot at the ankle.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF LARRY HOERNER

At 1:07 that morning, the most violent explosion Los Angeles had ever experienced touched off a seething cauldron of flames in the three-story ***Los Angeles Times*** Building at First Street and Broadway. A police officer walking his beat was knocked flat. He got up, ran to Box 12 at Broadway and First Street and pulled the hook. Fireboxes throughout downtown were pulled. Telephone calls lit up the LAFD switchboard. Firefighters at Station 3 were jolted awake by the explosion and some were reportedly thrown from their beds. Even as Box 12 began clanging in, the firefighters were sliding the poles.

It was a short run for Station 3's chemical, hose, engine and aerial ladder rigs. Never in their careers — or the history of the LAFD — had so large a building been so totally-engulfed in flames and thick smoke feeding on ink, newsprint and the wooden interior of the stone-clad building. Streets for blocks around were littered with broken glass and fallen power and telephone lines.

The explosion occurred shortly before press time while 100 workers were in the building. In those few windows that were not spewing flames stood smoke-shrouded workers who could not get to fire escapes or stairways. Some jumped before the first apparatus arrived. Intense heat and the rapidly-spreading flames thwarted any hope of raising aerial ladders. Truck company firefighters opened a net and many workers leaped into it and were saved. Others could no longer suffer the withering heat and dense smoke. They jumped, missed the net, and some of them were killed. Still other workers were momentarily framed in the smoke-and-flame belching windows before collapsing and dying in the inferno.

Immediately sounded second and third alarms brought a total of eight engines, two trucks, a combination chemical and hose wagon and the water tower. Even the Gorter's mighty punch was no threat to a fire of this magnitude. As the ***Times*** became a furnace with fire and smoke showing at all windows and flames soaring skyward, firefighters concentrated th
efforts upon burning exposures. Blast-shattered windows
these buildings provided easy access for firebrands and radi
heat which caused heavy damage to buildings including
Baumgardt Publishing Company, 116 North Broadway and
three-story brick rooming house at 227-31 West First Stre

Firefighters tried to bore into the flames with their lin
William Campbell of Engine 17 was operating a stream ins
a first floor window of the ***Times*** when the fire-weaker
second floor collapsed. Campbell was buried up to his neck
a deluge of heavy steel beams, bricks and stones. Firefight
thought he had been killed until they heard Campbell calli
for help.

While firefighters covered Campbell with protective strea
of water, a rescue team crawled over the rubble. For more th
two hours, the rescue team pried and clawed away at deb
until, at last, Campbell's chest was free. An iron beam wh
had fallen across his foot could not be moved. Firefighters tr
to cut the beam to free him, but were unsuccessful. They tr
to pry the beam up to release Campbell. That did not wo
either.

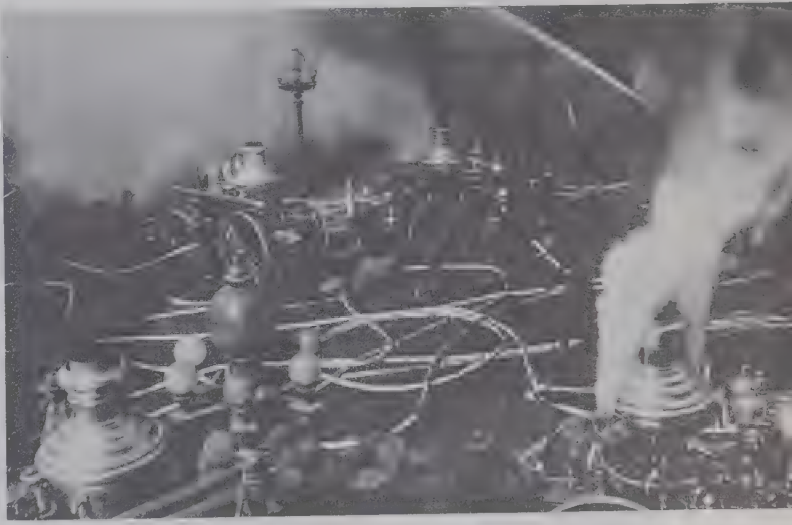
"I guess my foot goes, boys," Campbell told his rescue
Firefighters refused to give up as more rocks and beams thre
ened to fall and kill all of them. Campbell pleaded with them
cut off his foot. Trapped for three-and-one-half hours, a rece
ing hospital doctor amputated Campbell's foot at the ankle
he was at last freed. Campbell miraculously survived.
would never answer another alarm and was pensioned.

Even as the fiery destruction of the ***Times*** continued, wo
ers who had escaped used presses of the ***Los Angeles Heral***
put out a four-page Saturday edition headlined, **"UNIONI
BOMBS WRECK THE TIMES; MANY SERIOUSLY I
JURED."** The explosion and fire killed 20 workers and inju
many more. It was the largest loss of life in a fire or explosi

e city's history up to that time. Despite the utter destruc- the *Times* never missed an edition. The newpaper rebuilt e same site and on July 1, 1935, moved to its present First Spring Streets location.

he bombing of the *Times* was not unexpected after many ts. With growing interest among Los Angeles working- in joining labor unions, the *Times* led the fight against formation of unions, while lauding the arrest of union nizers and the council's passage of an anti-picketing ordi- ce. The bomb consisted of a time clock inside a suitcase d with 16 sticks of dynamite which had been placed along- the rear of the building in what *Times* workers referred to Ink Alley". On December 11, 1911, John J. McNamara, etary of the International Association of Bridge and Struc- l Iron Workers Union, pleaded guilty to master-minding bings in Los Angeles. He was sentenced to 15 years in San entin. His brother, James, who placed the suitcase bomb, pleaded guilty and received a life sentence. The bombing back the labor movement in Los Angeles for at least a eration.

ybreak, October 1, 1910, revealed the full extent of the explosion and fire ich destroyed the Los Angeles Times *building following the planting of a e bomb consisting of 16 sticks of dynamite.*



The five-story Byrne Building at Third Street and Broadway was destroyed in a February 16, 1911, fire which called out 20 of the LAFD's 27 steamers to the four-alarm blaze.

Many fire departments — Los Angeles was no exception — d what firefighters called hoodoo or bad luck fire alarm xes. Whenever an alarm was sounded from the hoodoo box often meant firefighters could expect to be jinxed by a large, fficult fire which could, and often did, result in injuries and aths. Box 13 at Third Street and Broadway was the Los ngeles Fire Department's unlucky box.

The hoodoo was at work again at 7:47 a.m., February 16, 11, when Box 13 was pulled for a fire in the Byrne Building at e northwest corner of Broadway and Third Street. The jinx arted even before the first apparatus arrived as a responding mbination chemical and hose wagon collided with a motor- clist who was injured. An inversion layer of air and a stiff ind from the north held smoke to near-ground level. Fire- ghters pulling in on the first, second, third and, finally, the urth alarm at 8 a.m., could hardly see the building or across roadway.

Working almost completely in the thick murk, compounded y the smoke puffing from 20 of the city's 27 steamers, Eley nd his firefighters were confronted by one of the most diffi- ult battles of their careers. Fire starting in the basement of the ve-story Byrne Building had extended to first floor stores and om there snaked upward through and around partitions, elevator shafts, open stairways and concealed spaces as flames and smoke invaded second, third, fourth and fifth floor offices. The Gorter tower was raised to its full 65-foot-length and began boring into the fire. Firefighters could not see the nozzle through the smoke and therefore had no way of knowing whether the tower was putting out fire or overloading the floors with water. More lines supplied the Gorter's wagon battery as it pounded a husky stream into the smoke-clogged building.

Firefighters quickly had 34 streams working, but the smoke prevented them from seeing whether the water was effectively hitting the fire. Incredibly thick smoke overcame firefighters and falling glass cut more of them. Nine firefighters, including Albert Hitchcock of Combination Chemical Hose Company No. 6, were rushed to hospitals. Hitchcock nearly died of smoke inhalation. Learning of the fire and the large number of firefighter casualties, 15 off-duty firefighters hurried to the fourth alarmer and helped in the battle.

The hot, smoky job stubbornly balked every attempt to check it. Eley's fireground command was severely hampered by the unfortunate lack of a back alley, which therefore limited access for exterior or interior attack. With tens of thousands of gallons of water gorging the building, there was no telling when a wall might collapse. Eley ordered his men to position themselves well away from them. Not until 9:50 a.m., was Eley able to notify Mayor Alexander that the fire was under control. Steamer companies spent the rest of the day pumping out flooded basements. Fire, smoke and water caused damages well in excess of $250,000. Firefighters learn to forget most fires. The Byrne Building would not be one of them. Hoodoo Box 13 had struck again and the Byrne became one of the legendary fires in LAFD history.

Recognizing the efforts of firefighters at the Byrne Building fire, the fire commission voted seven days later, February 23, 1911, to create a bronze Honor Medal, together with a roll of merit and to honor firefighters demonstrating exceptional bravery at the risk of their lives.

Firefighter Arthur W. Brown of Engine 3 was awarded the first medal. On July 1, 1911, Engine 3 was one of the companies called to a small roof fire at the Hotel Milain, 309 South Main Street. Brown was stoking the steamer's boiler at a Third and Main Streets hydrant when he heard spectators scream. Racing directly at him were three huge white Percherons pulling

Engine 4. Brown saw there was no driver and no engineer riding the rear coal box.

The driver, W. J. Roeder, was southbound on Main Street when he swerved to avoid a trolley car and a wagon. The steamer glanced off the trolley and the engine's metal-rimmed rear wheels skidded on the tracks. Roeder, who had not fastened his seat belt, was hurled from the rig. Acting Engineer Herbert Clark jumped off the coal box and tried to run to the driver's seat. He was struck by the careening steamer and thrown aside while terrified horses stampeded down Main Street with the smoking steamer fishtailing behind them.

As the runaway horses flashed past him, Brown grabbed an iron post on the steamer and swung himself onto the coal box. He crawled around the hot boiler, along the suction hose and slipped into the driver's seat. Grabbing the reins, Brown stepped as hard as he could on the brake rod and stopped the horses in half a block while thousands of spectators cheered.

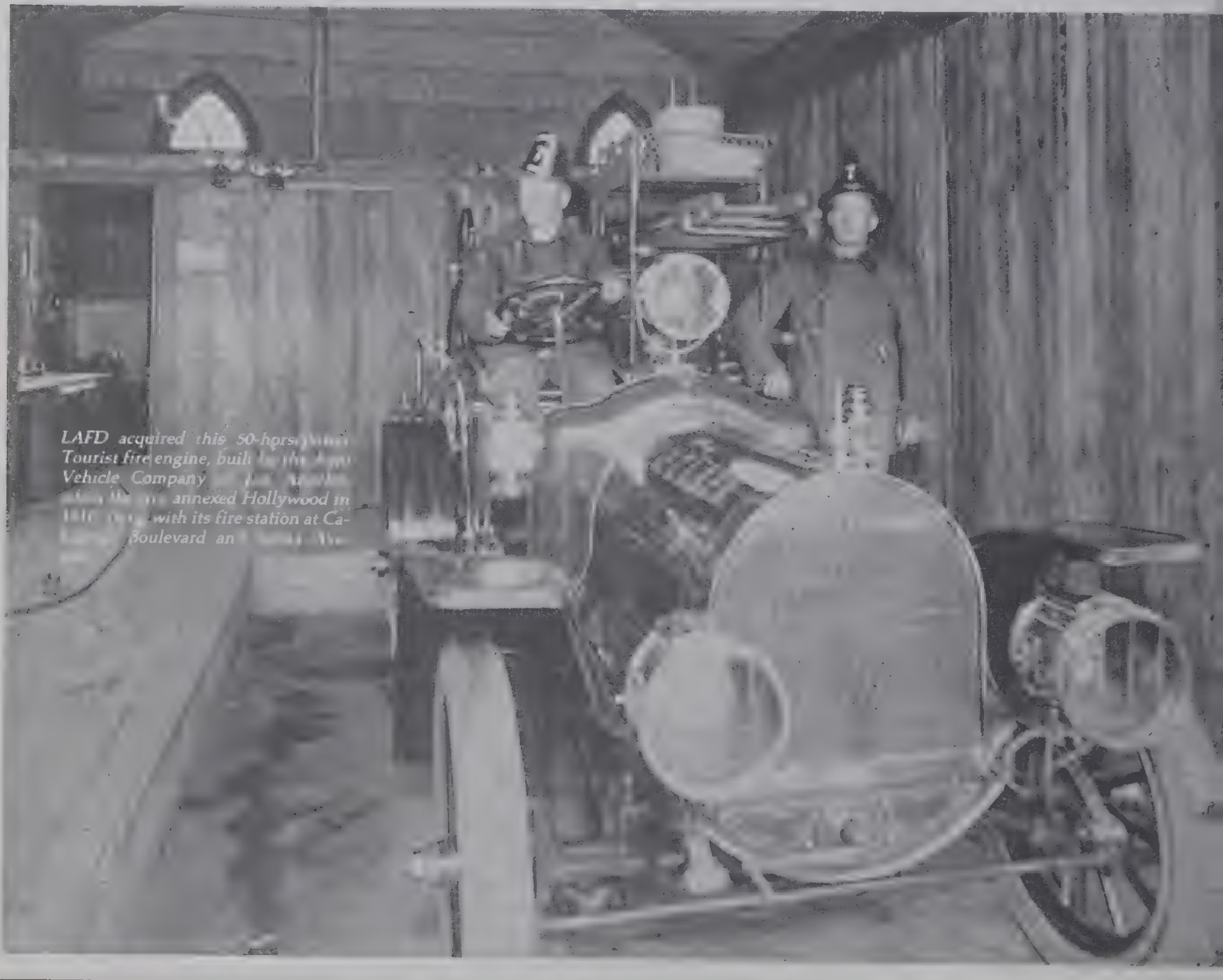
On January 22, 1912, Eley and the fire commission presented the bronze Honor Medal to Brown and promoted him to lieutenant. In addition to Brown, the chief engineer and commissioners cited meritorious acts of 64 other firefighters. Little did Brown or those 64 other firefighters realize the formal recognition of their heroism that day was the forerunner of the Los Angeles Fire Department's Medal of Valor awards presentation ceremonies honoring firefighters and paramedics who, year after year, carry forward that tradition of courage beyond the call of duty.

The Medal of Valor, as it was known at the time of the LAFD Centennial, traces its history to the 1912 start of awards bronze Honor Medals. The Honor Medal was, at a later tir referred to as the Medal of Bravery as well as the Medal Valor. Chief Engineer Raymond M. Hill in 1966 asked Fi fighter Dean Lange of Engine 42 to design a new Medal Valor. Lange's design, approved and adopted by the fire Co mission on April 12, 1967, is the medal that was thereaf awarded. Lange also designed the LAFD centennial badge

The Los Angeles Firemen's Relief Association was, mea while, expanding membership services. In September, 19 the Association began intermittent publication of a four-pa pamphlet, ***The Firemen's World,*** which was primarily inten ed to inform members of matters directly relating to th welfare. The pamphlet was inspired by the success of the 19 publication by the Relief Association of a 115-page, ***Los A geles Fire Department Souvenir*** book which largely consist of photographs and biographies of officers, firefighters a their stations.

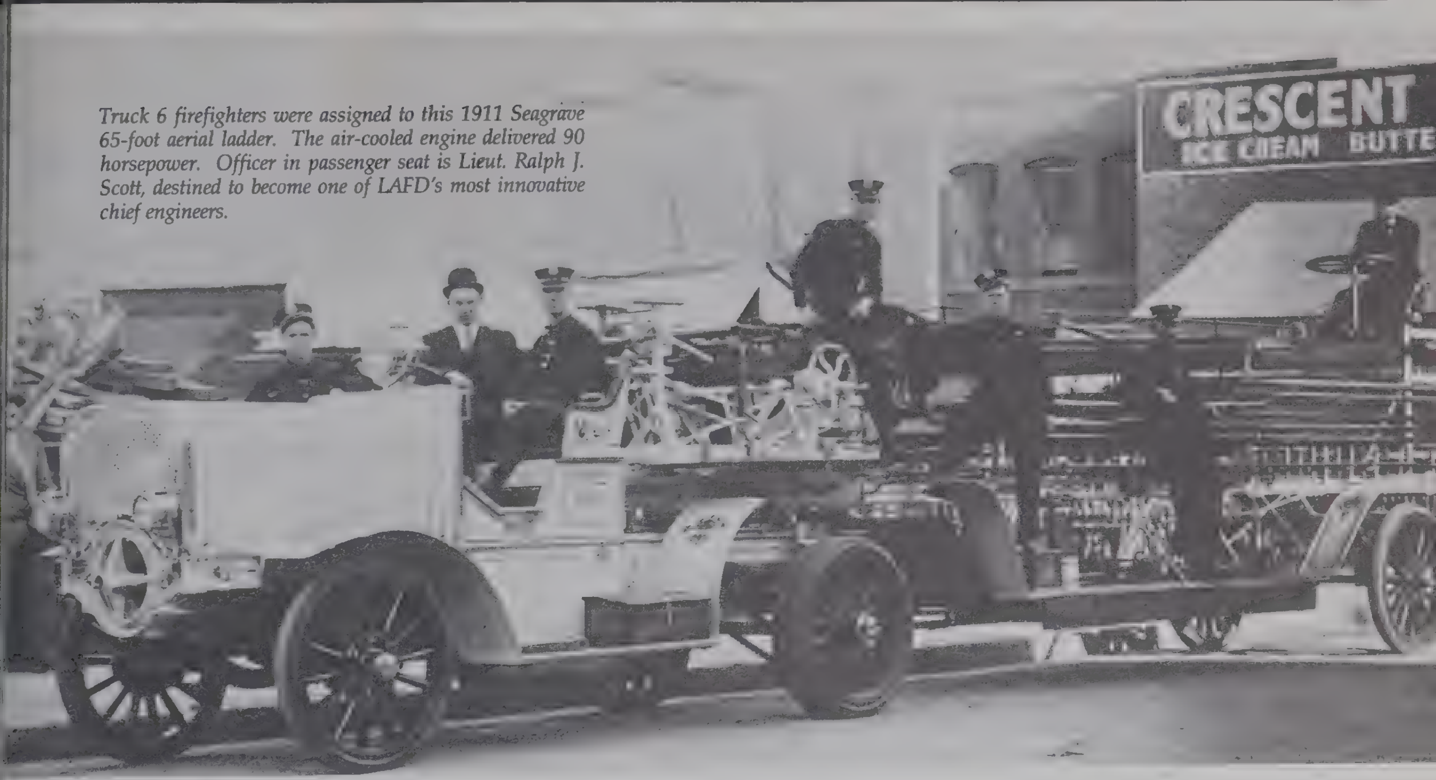
The Firemen's World ceased publication during World W I but was revived on May 15, 1925, with the first issue of *T Grape Vine,* a 12-to-20 page semimonthly magazine suppo ed by the Relief Association, the Los Angeles Firefighters A sociation and Fire Fighters Post No. 102 of the American L gion.

The Grape Vine's editorial content mainly reported LA athletic activities. During World War II paper shortages, *T Grape Vine* cut back to monthly publication. In January 19 the name of the magazine, which was by then the offic



LAFD acquired this 50-hors[illegible] Tourist fire engine, buil[illegible] Vehicle Company [illegible] annexed Hollywood in [illegible] with its fire station at Ca- [illegible] Boulevard an[illegible]

FROM THE COLLECTION OF LARRY HOERNER



Truck 6 firefighters were assigned to this 1911 Seagrave 65-foot aerial ladder. The air-cooled engine delivered 90 horsepower. Officer in passenger seat is Lieut. Ralph J. Scott, destined to become one of LAFD's most innovative chief engineers.

blication of its owner, the Los Angeles Firemen's Relief sociation, was changed to ***The Firemen's Grapevine.*** Editol space is made available to nearly every LAFD-related orgazation and activity.

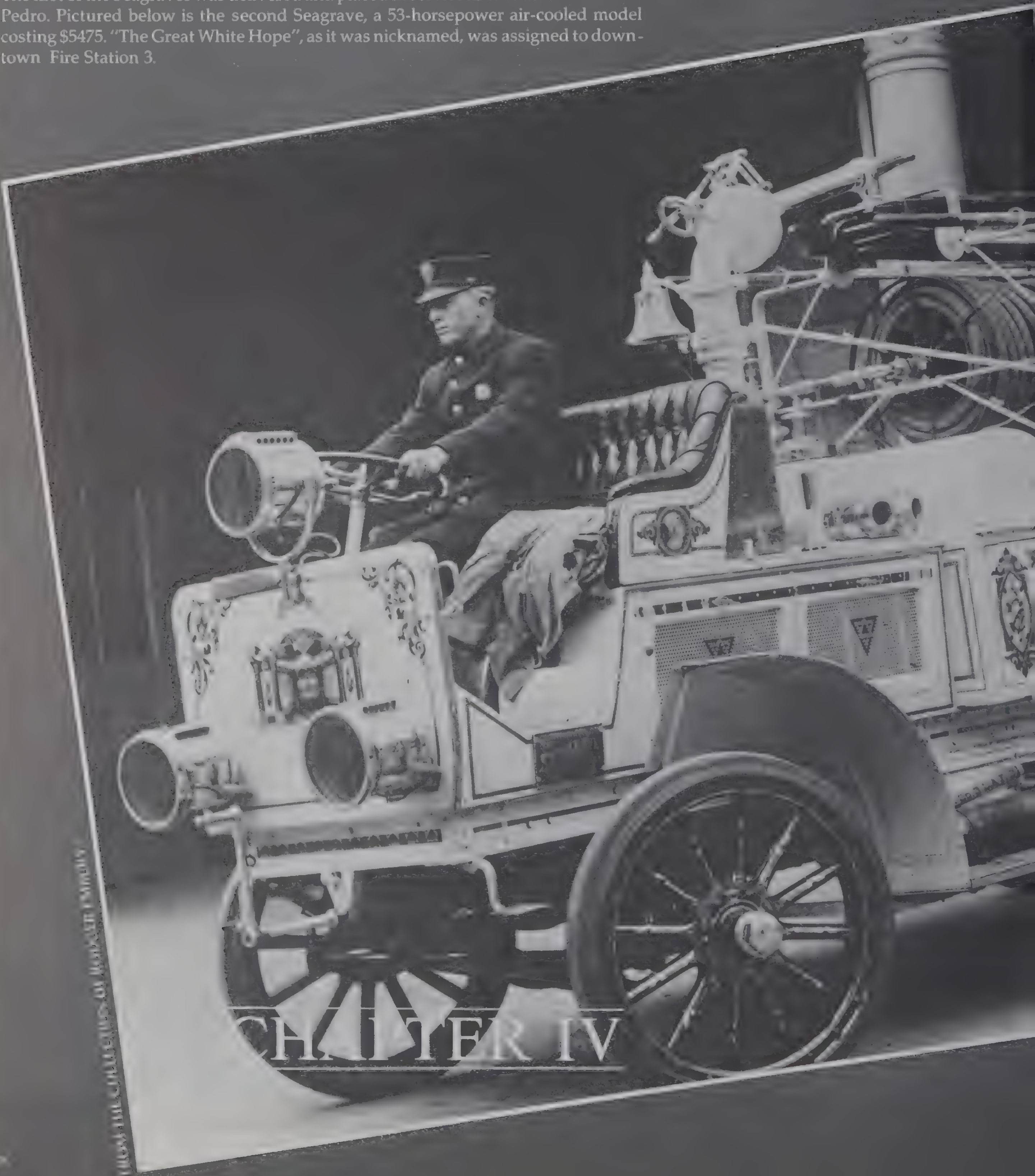
True to his pledge upon taking office, Eley constantly emasized that the lives of firefighters and those of the citizens the city they protected, depended upon constantly improved ining, physical fitness programs and better equipment. Alough he had doubts about the citywide practicality of motord equipment, Eley requested and the commission approved, ly 7, 1910, the purchase of a motorized apparatus. The dilapited 1887 drill tower at First and Hill Streets was replaced, pril 17, 1911, by a modern wooden facility at the Corporation rd, Avenue 19 and Pasadena Avenue.

Although there was no question that motorized apparatus as the future course of the department, Eley's ambivalence ntinued during the next year. The prospect of changing from rse-drawn to motor-powered equipment was not without mplex considerations. Contrary to popular belief, the initial luctance among chiefs throughout the United States was not idence of hidebound traditionalism akin to that when the and-pumper-equipped volunteers resisted steam fire engines in many cities.

Cost of motorized equipment, maintenance and training men to use it was, of course, a primary consideration. Los Angeles, like other cities, had made heavy investments in their fleets of horse-drawn apparatus. Of more concern was the undeniable recognition that steam fire engines had proven their reliability for so many years. Motorized rigs had not. A major fire — with lives in danger — was no time to be experimenting with largely untried and unproven motorized pumpers. The early ones, moreover, did not have the 1000-gallon-per-minute and more pumping power that was one of the major advantages of steam fire engines. Too, gasoline-powered fire engines at first required a complicated arrangement of one motor for propulsion and another motor for pumping.

Beset by a host of advantages, disadvantages and unknowns, the fire commission wisely decided in 1910, to send Eley east to visit other fire departments which were well into motorized equipment; largely because the manufacturers were based east of the Mississippi. From what he learned during his study trip, Eley would be able to best determine how the LAFD could most effectively enter the motorized age. Eley's trip, little noted at the time, marked the twilight of the heyday of the horses.

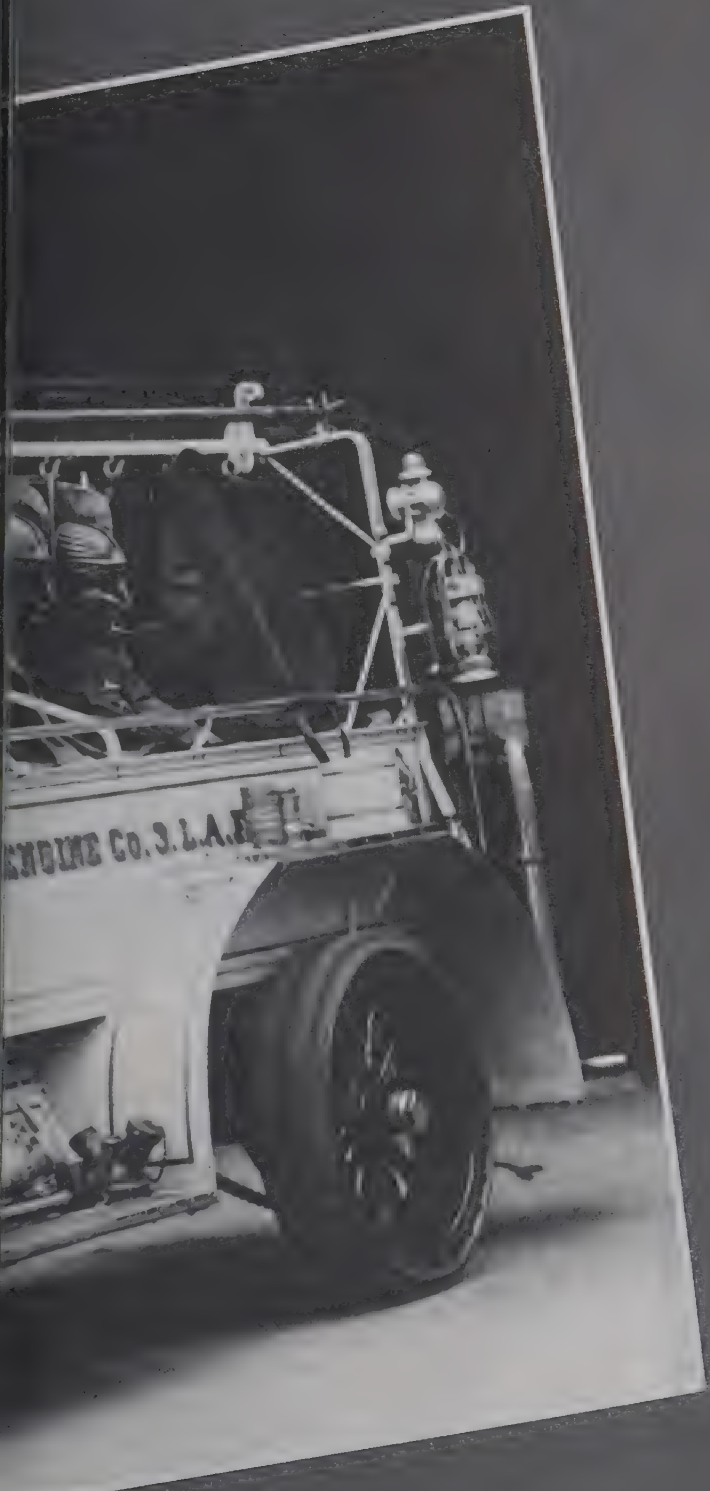
Five Seagrave rigs were among the LAFD's first purchases of motorized apparatus. The first of the Seagraves was delivered and placed in service in 1910 at Hose 6 in San Pedro. Pictured below is the second Seagrave, a 53-horsepower air-cooled model costing $5475. "The Great White Hope", as it was nicknamed, was assigned to downtown Fire Station 3.



FROM THE COLLECTIONS OF [illegible]

CHAPTER IV

REQUIEM FOR THE HORSES



Lingering doubts of the practicality of motorized apparatus over horse-drawn equipment were swept away during Chief Engineer Eley's 1910 visit to eastern cities. Never again would the Los Angeles Fire Department buy a steam fire engine although the department would continue to use them until 1923, when Engine 20's steam pumper was retired and sold in 1924.

Perhaps the earliest impression Eley perceived from his trip was the irony that Los Angeles, about to earn the title of having the highest per capita number of motor vehicles of any city in the world, was eight years behind the times when it came to auto fire apparatus. Communities large and small were well into conversions from fire horses to motors as early as 1903, starting in New London, Connecticut.

The Fire Department of New York, bellwether of fire service innovations at the time, had commited itself to motorized equipment for two years prior to Eley's arrival, despite the huge investments that city had in 200 steam fire engines. New York's first two auto engines had proven themselves during many hours of pumping at the March 25, 1911, Triangle Shirtwaist Company sweatshop disaster which killed 146 people, mostly women workers who leaped from windows eight to 10 stories above the street.

Savannah, that year became the first American city to completely convert to automotive equipment. How could they afford to do it so quickly? Chief Thomas Ballantyne explained his fire department bought 11 American LaFrance rigs on the monthly installment pay plan. As Eley knew, San Diego was about to go all-motorized, just as he recalled that Pasadena had, in 1909, acquired the first motorized fire engine on the Pacific Coast: a $950 Seagrave combination chemical and hose rig.

Cost comparisons and service life expectancies balanced the scales heavily in favor of motorized equipment as reports from the National Association of Fire Engineers (predecessor of the International Association of Fire Chiefs) indicated. Chiefs were generally reporting they got around 10-to-12 miles per gallon with their motorized equipment. Gasoline was selling for around 12-cents-per-gallon; far less than the cost of hay, bran and other horse supplies.

The head of the St. Louis Salvage Corps, Captain John O. Glanville, said his motorized patrol rigs covered the city 50 times faster than the horse-drawn outfits they replaced. Captain Glanville said he spent $816 a year for horse food and supplies; more than twice as much as he spent on his horseless carriages. Eley was tempted to pass that information along to the Pacific Coast insurance underwriters who were still waffling over Los Angeles' requests for a salvage corps supported by them.

Eley began to note the names of many new automotive companies which were fiercely competing for sales in the new market. Some of the traditionally best-known makers — Amoskeag, for example — had difficulties in converting their knowledge of steam technology to internal combustion engines. The best-known automobile makers were eyeing the market, too, but they were geared for mass assembly line production. The fire service was highly-specialized with no agreement upon a standard pumper that could be mass-produced. Fire apparatus was, moreover, far more complex mechanically and posed many more problems than the early automobiles made for the consumer market. If your Ford did not work, you "got out and got under" to fix it, according to the cliche of the day. If your fire engine did not start, the city could suffer a heavy loss of life and property.

Among the fastest-rising companies that most interested Eley was one which had successfully turned from horse-drawn to motorized equipment. The company started in 1886 — the same year the LAFD became a paid department — by building wooden ladders for northern Michigan apple orchard owners before turning to fire ladders for volunteers and moving to Columbus, Ohio, where its founder, Frederick S. Seagrave, began building self-raising, spring-hoist aerial ladders based upon the Hayes' patents, chemical rigs, hose wagons, pumpers and water towers.

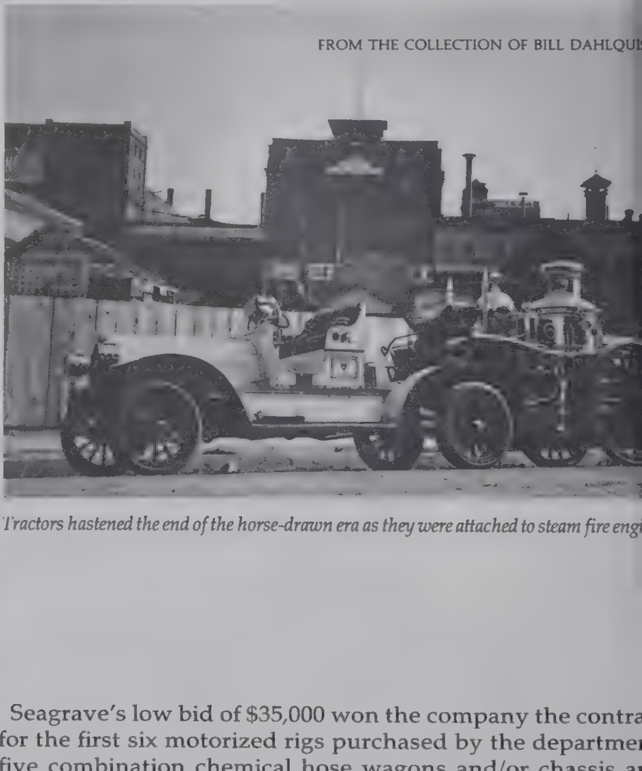
That the LAFD was a mite slow in taking the plunge into auto equipment was not without distinct advantages. During the eight years of motorized fire apparatus production and use, many problems had been solved and the department was saved much potential trial-and-error. Waterous, for example, developed a 600-gallon-per-minute pumper with a four-cylinder engine that served the dual function of propulsion and pumping. Waterous sold it to Alameda, California. Seagrave, in 1911, was developing its first automotive engine that particularly intrigued Eley. It had a Gorham centrifugal pump — a revolutionary approach in those days of rotary and piston pumps — which was rated at 1000-gallons-per-minute.

The more Eley reflected upon the idea, the more he realized that probably no city in America was better-suited for motorized apparatus than Los Angeles. The city's size, sprawl and continuing expansion often required long, exhausting and sometimes fatal runs for horses who collapsed and died from overexertion. Motorized equipment could cover more territory and faster: a factor not to be overlooked with the harbor and Hollywood annexations so distant from metropolitan area stations. Eley recalled that the department had sometimes refused to answer alarms along the shoestring strip of land connecting the city with its harbor, simply because the runs were either too long for the horses to make, or the realization the building would burn to the ground before the LAFD could possibly get there.

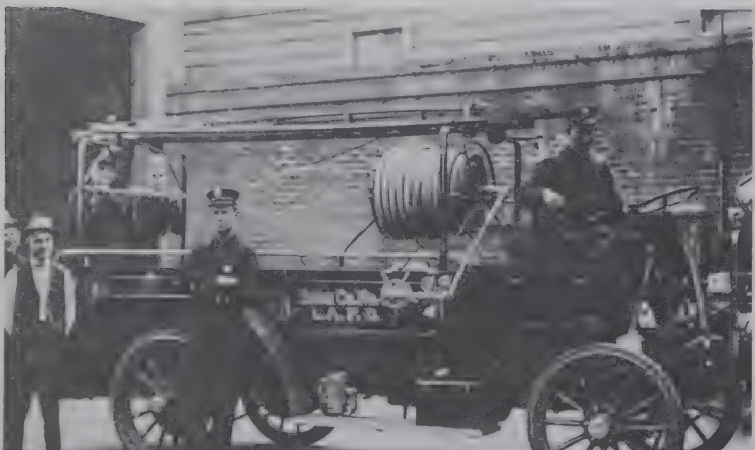
Los Angeles' hills, always a problem for the sturdiest of horses, would easily be climbed by gasoline-powered rigs. Their braking was better, too, and it was easier, therefore, control an internal combustion engine. They would make li easier for firefighters, too. No longer would firefighters retu from runs — false or major fires — to face the lengthy chore walking horses until they calmed, wiping them down ar preparing them for their next run. With motorized rigs, a they had to do was perhaps add a gallon or two of gasolir And maybe perform minor maintenance.

Eley returned to Los Angeles with a long-range progra largely patterned after those eastern departments he studie The transition from horses to motors would be gradual ar start with the purchase of combination chemical and hose ri and truck companies. Chemical wagons were cheaper tha pumpers and put out at least as many fires as steamers whi had many years of service life remaining. The city, moreov badly-needed additional truck companies. Eley further pr posed to buy a fully-motorized single-piece engine and ho apparatus as soon as possible to start the replacement of stear ers, beginning with the older ones.

During the phaseout of horses, some apparatus, especial steamers and truck companies, would be equipped with moto ized tractors. The plan Eley laid before the fire commission mid-1910 coincided with the time that the LAFD had 1 horses — the most it ever owned.


FROM THE COLLECTION OF BILL DAHLQUI

Tractors hastened the end of the horse-drawn era as they were attached to steam fire eng

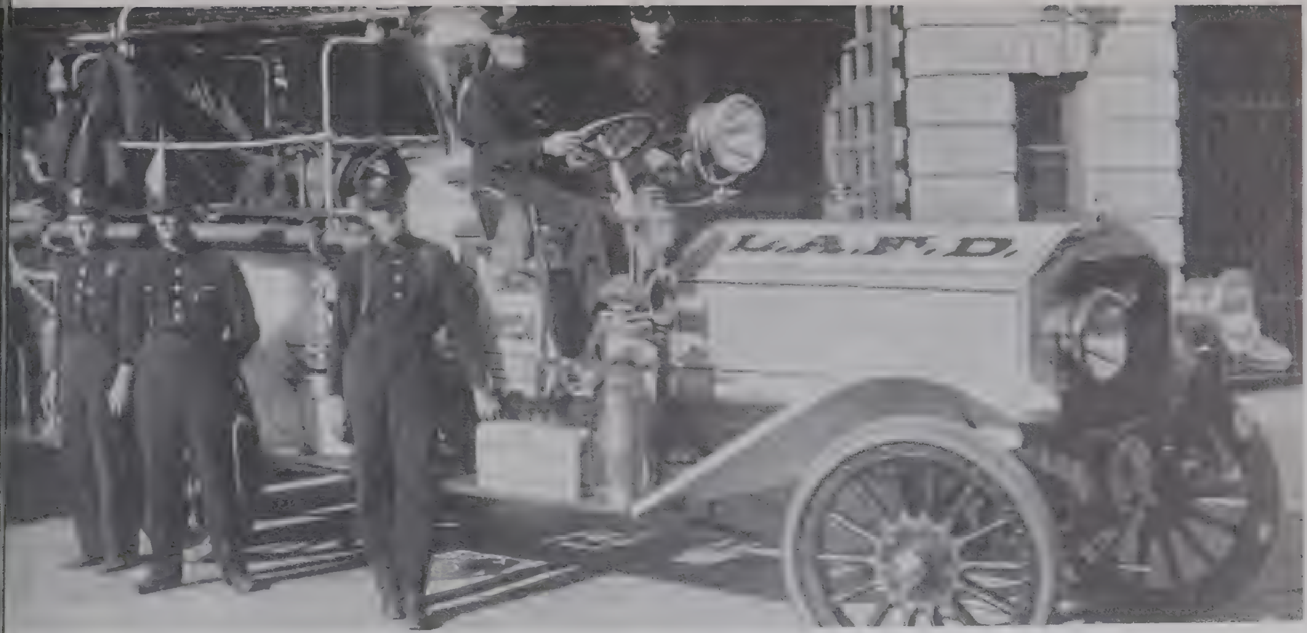

FROM THE COLLECTION OF LARRY HOERNER

Combination chemical and hose rigs, such as this Seagrave which went in service around 1914, carried 1200 feet of hose and were among the first pieces of apparatus to replace the aging steamers.

Seagrave's low bid of $35,000 won the company the contra for the first six motorized rigs purchased by the departmen five combination chemical hose wagons and/or chassis ar one 90-horsepower air-cooled 65-foot spring-hoist aerial ladd truck. While records are somewhat hazy, evidence strong suggests the first chemical rig went to Hose 6 in San Pedro. T second went to Engine 3, then at 217 S. Hill Street and the oth three rigs to Engines 20, 22 and Hose 1.

There is no question, however, that the city service apparat was initially designated Truck 6 and assigned to old F Station 16 at 136 North Hope Street and the 65-foot sprin hoist aerial, officially Truck 5, took the place reserved for it 4352 South Main Street.

The first of the Seagraves — a $5290 chemical rig with 20 feet of hose — arrived in Los Angeles in 1910 and went service on August 1 of that year. Eley, who logically could



911, the LAFD bought its first single-piece auto pumper and hose-carrying aratus. The $8650 rig was a Jumbo built by the Robinson Fire Apparatus nufacturing Company, St. Louis. The 700-gallon-per-minute pumper was igned to Fire Station 26 at 2475 West Washington Boulevard. Its location, then suburban, gave the engine a quick-hit capability for fires in the down-town, Hollywood and harbor areas. The station was the first to be especially designed for motorized equipment. FROM THE COLLECTION OF WALT PITTMAN AND THE LATE FRED ALLEN.

scribed as the father of motorized equipment in the Los geles Fire Department, was out of the city and missed the casion. Assistant Chief O'Donnell apparently was the only efighter present; a fortunate happenstance, perhaps because at provided front seat, running board and tailboard room for 14 people, including Mayor Alexander, the City Council esident and councilmen who climbed aboard the all-white in front of City Hall on Broadway and immediately set off a wild trip through the downtown area and beyond.

Chugging away from City Hall at a faster clip than horses uld trot, the chemical engine dodged around trolley cars, rse-drawn wagons, automobiles and pedestrians while head- g for the 19.5 per cent grade up the old Grand Avenue hill. he rig slowed to 20-miles-an-hour as it easily made the steep imb. Then it turned around and came back down, while the eagrave representative demonstrated its braking power by uickly stopping on the steep grade.

The stunt was repeated on the West Second Street hill be- veen Olive Street and Grand Avenue. Accelerating to its full 5-mile-an-hour speed, the 14 riders clung to the rig as it raced ong what was then a sparsely-settled residential area along Vashington Boulevard between Hoover Street and Normandie venue. Heading back downtown, the rig startled everybody it zigzagged for 20 blocks up and down Main Street and cross to Broadway where it completed its trial run at the curb ongside City Hall.

"That was one of the finest rides I ever had," said Mayor lexander, brushing the dust from his suit and wiping perspi- ation from his brow. "You can take it from me that the day of e fire horse is past." Not quite. The LAFD would continue to uy horses during the next four years to replace older animals. Jone were bought after 1915 and the horses were gradually ttritioned out of service by July, 1921.

In 1911, the year the Los Angeles Fire Department turned 25- ears-old, the department bought its first single-piece auto umper and hose-carrying rig for $8500. It was a Monarch nodel made by the Robinson Fire Apparatus Manufacturing Company of St. Louis. On November 10, the rig passed its 700- allon-per-minute pumping tests at Echo Park Lake and dur- ng the next several hours was road-tested round-and-round the block bordered by Second and Third, Broadway and Hill Streets. During these tests the phone rang in Eley's office. It was Mayor Alexander. The noise of the Robinson was disturbing the mayor's concentration upon city business. Alexander ordered Eley to take the Robinson somewhere else to finish the tests.

By 1912, this first-bought pumper was assigned to the LAFD's first station designed and built especially for motorized equipment: Fire Station 26 at 2475 West Washington Boulevard. Large cities at that time initially assigned their auto pumpers to downtown high-value districts to give them more activity and therefore gain more experience, as well as the public relations value of encouraging taxpayers to see the benefits of motorized apparatus.

Eley's assignment of the Robinson to what was then a suburban area was a smart move. The Robinson could cover a far larger district than horses and, moreover, was close to the Hollywood annexation. Via sparsely-built routes it could quickly reach the shoestring strip and the harbor. Although Robinson was among the best makers of early auto engines, the department never bought another, as Seagrave and American LaFrance all but cornered the LAFD market.

From the 1911 start of the motorized era until the 1929 national economic depression, when the department was forced to stop purchasing new apparatus for several years, the LAFD bought 58 Seagrave pumpers, 23 Seagrave combination chemical and hose rigs and 17 Seagrave aerial ladders — a total of 98 pieces of apparatus. Their closest competitor, American LaFrance, sold the LAFD 30 engines, two combination chemical and hose wagons and one aerial ladder truck during the same 18-year timespan.

The fleet over that period comprised a sprinkling of other apparatus including seven Reo Speedwagon combination chemical and hose rigs, five 1924 Stutz city service ladder trucks and 12 Morelands, (one of them a one-of-a-kind 1916 squad and searchlight outfit designated Squad Wagon No. 1). The squad carried five huge searchlights, most of them with portable tripod-mounting capability, nozzles, hose and assorted fittings.

Although the LAFD was relatively slow to enter the motor-

Seagrave Gorhams had the sleek, sloped-back configuration similar to race cars of the early 1900s. Under their long, barrel-like hoods were T-shaped, water-cooled motors capable of developing up to around 145 horsepower; unheard of at that time.

ized era, it quickly made up for the lag by cherry-picking some of the best pumpers available. Between 1912 and 1913, the department bought six Gorham Seagraves, then regarded as the fastest and most powerful auto engines built, and featuring the fire service's first centrifugal pumps. Costing between $10,000 and $15,000 apiece, the Gorhams, as they were most frequently called, had the sleek, sloped-back configuration associated with race cars of that day. Seagrave appropriately sent Jack Heyser, a well-known race car driver, to demonstrate these speedy rigs.

Under their long, barrel-like hoods were T-shaped, water-cooled motors capable of developing up to around 145 horsepower, unheard of at that time, with nine-inch strokes. The turbine pump was rear-mounted directly behind the driver's seat. The seventh Gorham purchased was rated at 1000-gallons-per-minute, but delivered 1250-gallons during its arrival demonstration. Assigned to new Fire Station 28 at 644 South
Figueroa Street, when the house went in service on July
1913, firefighters boasted they had the fastest and first o
1000-gallons-per-minute centrifugal pumper ever built for
fire service. The other Gorhams were first housed at Fire
tions 1, 12, 20, 29, and 27 (replacing the Tourist chemical
which was reassigned to Fire Station 30 as Hose 3) when
new Hollywood fire station at 1625 Cahuenga Boulev
opened, October 25, 1913. The other Gorham went in servic
Fire Station 31 at 700 West Slauson Avenue, when it ope
April 2, 1914. That station was the LAFD's first bungalow-t
firehouse; a design that was to become traditional.

During these early years of motorization, the LAFD
nomically expedited the transition to gasoline horsepower
building or buying tractors to draw horse-drawn equipm
Another race car driver, John Walter Christie, best-known
his Indianapolis 500 exploits, developed a two-wheel, fr
drive tractor which looked like a truck that had been cut in
just behind the cab. In February, 1912, Christie began build
the first of about 600 of them for fire departments. The LA
acquired six Christies in 1913 and connected them to as m
Amoskeag, Metropolitan and Ahrens-Fox pumpers at Engi
2, 6, 11, 20, 22 and 25. American LaFrance was among
several manufacturers which adapted Christie's designs
built their versions of two-wheel, front-drive tractors.
LAFD bought one of these 1918 American LaFrances
Gorter converted his water tower which returned to serv
January 24, 1919, as a motor-driven apparatus.

Immersed as he was in bringing the LAFD into the er
motor fire apparatus, Eley realized it would be many y
before the city could afford fulltime, paid firefighters
stations throughout the rapidly-growing community. Vol
teer companies had to be formed to supplement the LA
protection, especially in outlying districts. In addition to th
part-paid, part-volunteer companies in the harbor area
Hollywood, the department was, by 1914, supporting 14 vol
teer companies in areas including Gardena, the Los Feliz
trict, Mount Washington, Atwater and Palms.

Innovative as he was in fire protection, Eley came up
still another idea when he personally encouraged the for
tion of volunteer fire companies of women who were taugh
operate hand-drawn, two-wheel hose reels. Eley's logic
that many men worked downtown or in industrial distr
during the day; thus leaving a shortage of men to fight fire
residential areas.

Capt. Marie Stack was officially appointed head of the
Angeles Fire Department's first all-women volunteer fire c

The first over-1000-gallon-per-minute centrifugal pumper ever built for the fire service was this 1913 Gorham Seagrave, which delivered 1250 gallons during its arrival demonstration. The Gorham turbine pump was mounted directly behind the driver's seat. The apparatus was first assigned to
Station 28 at 644 South Figueroa Street when the three-story brick house
in service, July 15, 1913.

Engineer Archibald Eley encouraged the formation of volunteer fire nies of women who were taught to operate hand-drawn, two-wheel hose His rationale was that many men worked downtown or in industrial ts during the day; thus leaving a shortage of men to fight fires in ntial districts sparsely-protected by the LAFD.

consisting of two female firefighters who reported to ain Stack. To signify her position, Eley presented Captain with a regulation fire cap and badge. The women an- ed their first alarm on June 6, 1912, when they were called grass fire at Third and Flower Streets. They had the fire in hand as Engine 3 firefighters arrived and assisted them eating out the embers with wet gunnysacks.

e LAFD's second female volunteer fire company was ed two months later among socially-prominent women ing in the exclusive First Street and Manhattan Place area e western outskirts of the city. Their district was so large they equipped their two-wheel hose reel with a device h enabled the rig to be hooked to the rear end of one of automobiles and pulled to fires. Officially known as the hattan Place Volunteer Fire Brigade of the LAFD, Capt. Caldwell and the matrons renamed their outfit The Society Fire Department.

In Wilmington, two years later, women formed The Wilmington Park Fire Ladies. Their chief, Louise Leonardo, and her fellow volunteers showed off their bright red hose reel with 700-feet of hose and a long tow rope. The rig was housed near the Wilmington Park Library. Setting citrus grove smudge pots afire, they showed their prowess to Eley and newsmen as they quickly doused the fires with their two-and-one-half-inch hoseline and a large, straight-bore brass nozzle.

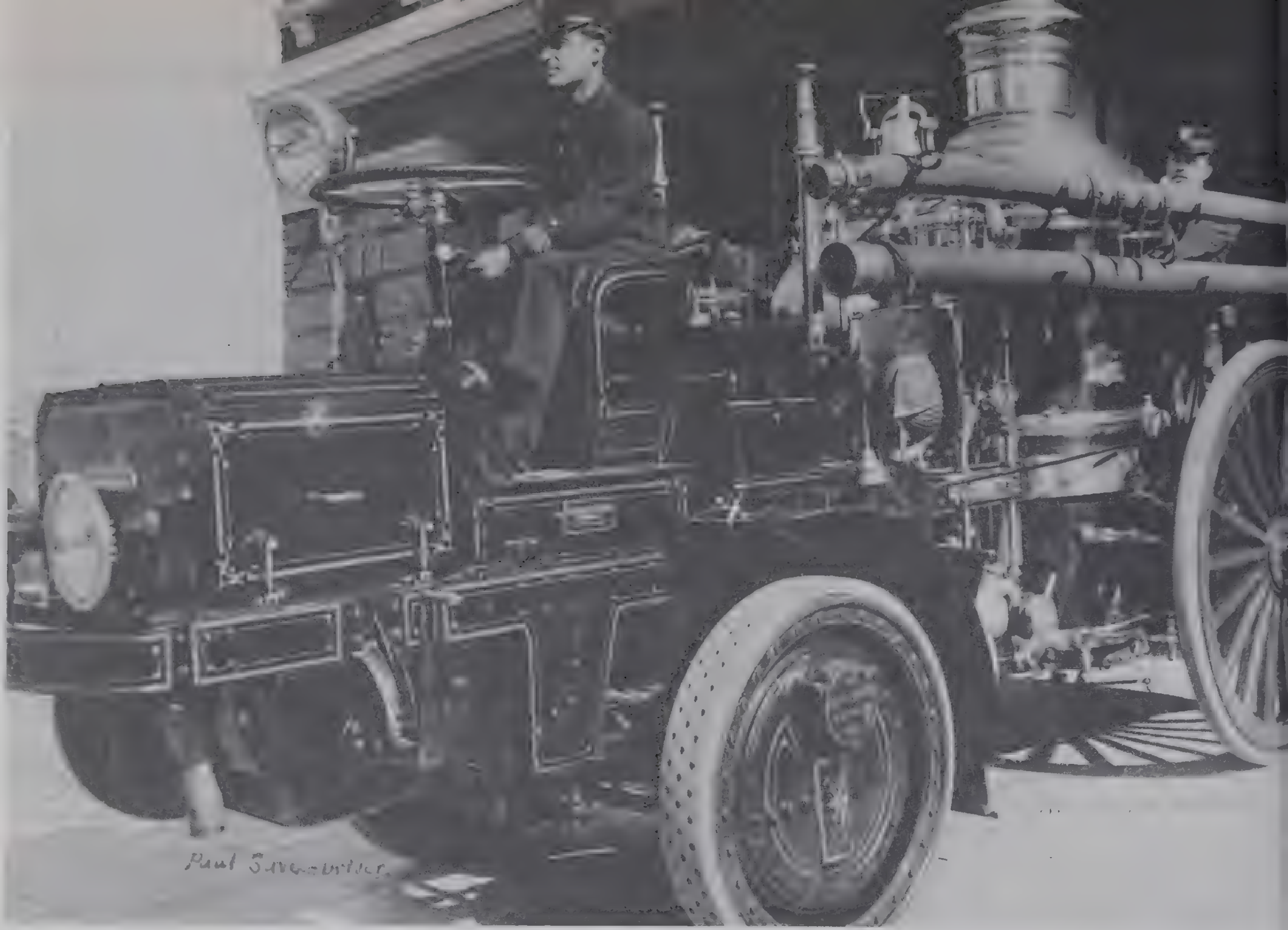
Hoping to reduce the number of basement fires that had resulted in many major downtown fires, Eley meanwhile lobbied the City Council until it passed a sprinkler ordinance in late August, 1912. The new law required basement and subbasement systems supplied by no less than a four-inch direct connection to city water mains. One sprinkler head was required for every 64-square-feet of floor space.

The ordinance applied to all new office buildings, apartment houses, hotels, lodging houses, warehouses and garages. Only buildings with basement bank vaults were exempted. The law did not apply to hundreds of pre-existing buildings, but it was an excellent start on what was to become a LAFD tradition of requiring built-in fire protection. During the seven years following passage of the ordinance, Eley would twice come close to losing his life in basement fires involving downtown buildings where sprinklers were not required.

The speed with which the LAFD's first motorized apparatus could get to a fire was impressively demonstrated late on the afternoon of September 4, 1912, when Eley was notified that Ocean Park's famous Fraser's Million-Dollar-Pier was burning. Ocean Park, Santa Monica and Venice firefighters needed the LAFD's help. The gigantic amusement pier was more than 14 miles from headquarters. Horse-drawn equipment could not possibly make the run. Eley ordered the nearest motorized pumper — Engine 26's Robinson — to respond, along with Hose 5 at 1409 West Vernon Avenue and Engines 4 and 13 from downtown.

The LAFD answered a 1912 appeal for help when flames engulfed Fraser's Million-Dollar-Pier in Ocean Park and destroyed or damaged 225 structures in a six-block area in the vicinity of Rose Avenue and Trolleyway (Speedway).

SANTA MONICA HISTORICAL SOCIETY



FROM THE COLLECTION OF MARX C. SCOTT

John Walter Christie of Indianapolis 500 racing fame, developed a two-wheel, front-drive tractor which could economically expedite the transition fro horse-drawn apparatus to gasoline horsepower. The LAFD bought six Christies, one of which was attached to Engine 29's American LaFrance 900-gallon-pe minute Metropolitan steamer. Shown are Driver Paul Save and Firefighter Richard J. Phillips.

Heading out Washington Boulevard to the beach, Eley and the four motorized companies fought heavy traffic as thousands of spectators were driving toward the awesome thick black cloud of smoke that was obscuring the setting sun. Eley arrived and all four companies were operating in less than 27 minutes after the chief engineer was called at headquarters. The long wooden pier and its many attractions — the famous observation balloon, the Crazy House, Dragon's Gorge and the auditorium-dance pavilion — were doomed. Without fireboats, there was absolutely no way to make an attack on the fire and it was too dangerous to bring men and apparatus onto the pier. Fraser's Million-Dollar-Pier was written off as lost while the stiff breeze from the ocean drove thick smoke and heat directly at firefighters.

Flames, firebrands and radiant heat joined together as the fire jumped the Ocean Front traffic way and began gnawing into blocks of buildings in an area encompassing Ashland Avenue on the north, Rose Avenue on the south and Trolleyway (Speedway) on the east. Jam-packed among these narrow streets were six blocks of wooden cottages, brick hotels, apartment houses, stores and commercial buildings.

Eley and his four companies, assisted by LAFD volunteers from stations in the western section of the city, set up a battleline on Pier Avenue to protect the Auto Inn Garage, despite warnings that a 300-gallon storage tank of gasoline was inside. After an hour-long battle, radiant heat ignited the garage and bulled firefighters backward. The tank exploded and skyrocketed over their heads. Paul Shoup, president of the Pacific Electric Railway, sent word to Eley that he had a train of flat cars standing by to rush more fire engines to the beach. Eley gratefully accepted.

By nightfall, the glare and flames could be seen from m parts of Los Angeles. The observation balloon's tie-down ro burned away. Lifting skyward, the ropes snagged the burn flagpole atop the dance pavilion and carried it upward. T blazing balloon was blown far inland by the stiff ocean w and then came crashing down 40 miles away in San Dim

The conflagration raged for nearly four hours as it wiped the pier, everything on it and destroyed or damaged 225 str tures in a six-block area of almost complete devastation. C man was drowned when he jumped off the end of the pier i heavy surf and 15 other persons were missing by midnig Losses were set at $3 million. The site would one day beco the Pacific Ocean Park amusement center which itself wo become the site of several severe fires.

Of all downtown Los Angeles hotels, none was to beco better-known among firefighters than the six-story brick H tel St. George at 115 East Third Street. The first major fire the hotel occurred on the evening of November 18, 19 Flames, starting in a second-floor linen closet, spread to fifth and sixth floors through an open-sided elevator sh surrounded by an open stairway. Answering the second ala Eley found at least 20 people trapped in fifth and sixth fl windows. Some were on ledges and preparing to jump.

Joseph Martin, a jewelry salesman, had already leaped fr his sixth floor room and lay dead as firefighters opened th nets and raised aerial ladders. As Eley took command, Jul Malone, the hotel's engineer, ran from the front door. Malo almost completely enveloped in flames, fell into the gutt Eley rolled him over-and-over and snuffed the flames, Malone was fatally burned. The trapped guests jumped af firefighters, aided by others, opened nets. Two women sim

)'s one-of-its-kind squad and searchlight company, a 1916 land.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF PAUL DITZEL

ously leaped from a fifth floor ledge and landed together in net and survived. Mrs. Charlotte Harrington dropped her y burned 18-month-old baby into a life net before jump- The baby recovered. Mrs. Harrington missed the net and killed.

potting two women and a man trapped in a sixth floor dow, Eley grabbed a pompier (scaling) ladded and carried it an aerial ladder which reached only to the fifth floor directeneath them. Eley hooked the pompier over the sixth floor e and, hand-over-hand, made his way up the scaling lad- He made three trips up and down the pompier and rescued two women and the man.

robably never in the history of the LAFD had so many lives n saved by nets. Although 20 persons suffered injuries, said only the courageous work of the firefighters prevent- catastrophic loss of life. Eley singled out Firefighters F. A. nson and D.S. Witherbee for special recognition. They were rded Honor Medals and their names were inscribed on the dquarters roll of merit.

Only then did Assistant Chief O'Donnell call Eley's feat to fire commission's attention. On December 16, 1912, Eley became the first chief engineer to be awarded the Honor Medal. In accepting the medal, Eley pointed out what so many other LAFD heros would say in later years when their courage was similarly recognized: "It was only my duty that I performed. It was a thing that any member of the department would do."

Immediately after the St. George fire, Eley campaigned for new laws which would prevent disastrous hotel and apartment house fires. "The cause of the fire being so disastrous was primarily the elevator shaft which was open on all four sides from the basement to the roof," he reported to the fire commission. "I also find there was no rear stairway, as is now required by the building ordinance; this building having been constructed before the present ordinance became effective. I dread to think of what would have happened if the fire had occurred two hours later, as the hotel would have been filled with sleeping guests and the loss of life would have been terrible." Eley urged new, retroactive laws to abate similar problems which existed throughout the downtown area and, further, recommended that additional fire escapes be legally-required on all multiple-occupancy buildings. The commission unanimously approved his recommendations and forwarded them to the City Council for action.

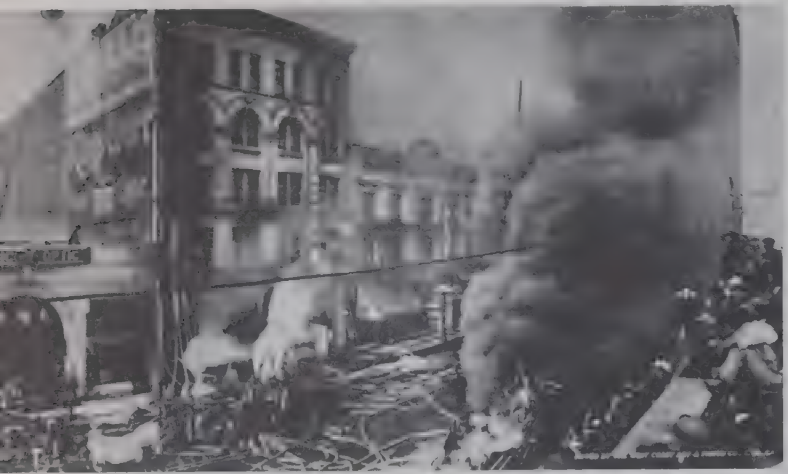
Eley's proposals were fought by hotel and apartment owners. They said built-in fire protection was cost-prohibitive. Replied Eley: "In these controversies it is shown that only the dollar is considered and that human life is considered as nothing against the accumulation of dollars." Eley's campaign was not successful against the powerful influence of the building owners.

It would take another 70 years and worse hotel and apartment house fires before the LAFD finally achieved the capability to require built-in retroactive fire protection in these occupancies. Dozens of people would perish, including the seven who were killed, March 25, 1952, when the St. George burned again.

Eley, himself, was nearly killed two months after the St. George tragedy when an alarm was turned in at 2 p.m., January 23, 1913, from a private alarm company box in the Los Angeles Wallpaper & Paint Company, 529 South Main Street. Quickly

Even the fully-extended Gorter Water Tower's mast is obscured by thick smoke hugging the ground as firefighters battle a January 23, 1913 blaze that started in a wallpaper and paint store at 529 South Main Street and quickly spread throughout the adjacent five-story Brennan Hotel.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF BILL DAHLQUIST

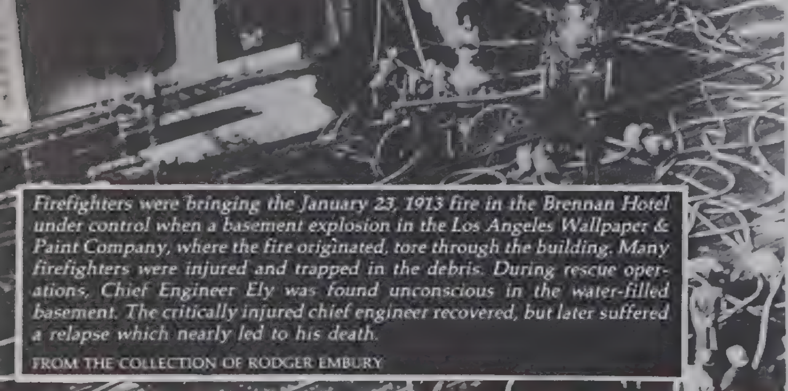


The Brennan Hotel's brick and stone exterior masked the labryinth of wood inside, as open stairways quickly spread smoke and fire throughout the building. The hotel's 150 guests fled or were evacuated by firefighters. The January 23, 1913, blaze injured around 30 firefighters.

arriving companies found flames and smoke spreading from basement-stored flammable liquids. The first floor was well-involved and the fire was invading the adjacent Hotel Brennan, 525½ South Main Street, a five-story brick building with 150 registered guests. Second and third alarms brought most horse-drawn and motorized apparatus from downtown stations.

Twenty lines attacked the fire as flames which, floor-by-floor and via open stairways and an elevator shaft, quickly engulfed the Brennan, even as the Gorter lobbed its stream into flames penetrating the roof. All hotel guests fled or were evacuated. Despite the onslaught of handlines and master streams, the stubborn smoke and flames gave no hint of submission an hour after the third alarm. Firefighters crawled into the paint store and hotel, were overcome by smoke and were replaced by fresh crews, who, themselves, fell victims to smoke poisoning.

By 4:30, firefighters were starting to make progress and had advanced lines deep inside the wallpaper and paint store, when an explosion, probably caused by ignition of turpentine, kerosine or other flammable vapors, tore through the building. Lieut. Jesse A. Smith, Firefighters Roscoe Conklin and Edward Welte, all of Engine 24, were blown out of the building. They survived their injuries.



Firefighters were bringing the January 23, 1913 fire in the Brennan Hotel under control when a basement explosion in the Los Angeles Wallpaper & Paint Company, where the fire originated, tore through the building. Many firefighters were injured and trapped in the debris. During rescue operations, Chief Engineer Ely was found unconscious in the water-filled basement. The critically injured chief engineer recovered, but later suffered a relapse which nearly led to his death.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF RODGER EMBURY

Inside, the ceiling fell and hundreds of rolls of water-soaked wallpaper came tumbling down. Plaster, cement and the weight of the paper collapsed the floor and dropped firefighters into the basement which was waist-deep in water and thick with acrid smoke. Trapped in the basement were Captain Clayton F. Blackwell (who had barely recovered from injuries while fighting the St. George fire) Howard Dyer and Roy King, all of Engine 23 and Firefighters William Shiller of Engine 7 and J. F. Corneaugh of Water Tower 1.

Eley and other firefighters plunged into the smoke to rescue them. After those trapped were brought out and on their way to hospitals, somebody noticed that Eley was missing. Firefighter Jose P. M. Reyes of Engine 5 found Eley still in the basement and saved him. The chief engineer was rushed in critical condition to Good Samaritan Hospital where doctors found he suffered lung and other internal injuries caused by smoke and swallowing basement water contaminated by flammable liquids. Eley also was found to have incurred a severely-sprained back and highly-inflamed eyes. In addition to Eley, as many as 30 firefighters were overcome by smoke or injured at the fire which caused $100,000 damage. Fifteen of them were hospitalized.

Eley was hospitalized several weeks before returning to duty, although his injuries constantly bothered him. That spring he took a leave of absence and went to a Lake Elsinore resort to recuperate. Eley was there two months when he suffered a major relapse and was near death. Fire Commissioner A. F. Frankenstein, and Eley's physician, Dr. Arthur D. Houghton, raced to Riverside, borrowed an ambulance and a driver and, with siren and red light, rushed Eley 100 miles to the Good Samaritan Hospital where he recovered and resumed work.

The day after the fire, the ***Los Angeles Examiner*** editorialized in support of a proposed charter amendment creating a better pension system for firefighters and police: "Thousands saw these heroic men enter the inferno into which their duty called them. Shortly after . . . word went whispering through the watching throngs that they were lost and . . . pity stirred all hearts as their unconscious forms were being stumblingly brought forth by their no less heroic fellows. Every now and then some . . . firemen receive medals as public recognition of conspicuous acts of heroism. The recognition is little enough . . . The hero is soon forgotten by the many. Only his family knows what the performance of his duty has cost him; the aches and pains, the failing eyes, the strained vitals.

"Today the city is ringing with news of the fire, its desperate character, the deadliness of the developed fumes, the bravery of the firemen; yet 30 days from now, who will remember those names, who will then think of the men who, at that time, will be suffering in silence from the aftereffects of yesterday's injuries?" The editorial concluded by imploring voters to approve the charter amendment.

The charter amendment passed that spring, the City Council unanimously approved the new ordinance and Mayor Henry Rose vetoed it on September 3. Rose insisted that firefighters and police were entitled to better pensions. Councilmen agreed with the mayor, rewrote the ordinance and it was signed into law, September 16, 1913. On November 3, city officials had more good news for firefighters. No longer would they have to go to City Hall each month to pick up their paychecks. Their checks would be delivered to them at their stations.

By then, the long-needed Fire Station 28 at 644 South Figueroa Street had been opened on July 15, 1913, to protect the area's wealthy residential district. The three-story brick, granite, concrete and reinforced-steel station had many appointments similar to those at Fire Station 23. While built to accommodate horses, none were ever stalled there. The first two companies stationed at 28's were the LAFD's most powerful Gorham Seagrave, unofficially rated at 1380-gallons-per-minute and a Seagrave combination chemical and hose wagon. In April, 1914, a new Seagrave 75-foot aerial ladder, designated Truck 7, was added to the house and, in 1923, one of the department's first two salvage companies was stationed there. Fire Station 28, which also had quarters for a chief, was to become one of the most famous fire stations in the world and among the most often visited by out-of-town fire chiefs and others interested in the LAFD.

The $65,000 cost of Fire Station 28, unusually high for firehouses of that era, was justified by the double-duty purpose for which it was intended. The LAFD planned to move the fire alarm system of batteries and other equipment from the basement of the firetrap City Hall on the east side of Broadway (which was named Fort Street until February 19, 1890) between Second and Third Streets. The equipment was to be installed in the fire-resistant basement of Station 28. With the second-floor dormitory utilized by firefighters, the spacious third floor would house a modern fire alarm office with telephone switchboards, alarm registers and transmitters. It is not known why the fire alarm system was never moved to Fire Station 28, although cost was undoubtedly one explanation.

The third floor became the first official offices of the Los Angeles Firemen's Relief Association. The organization previously met unofficially at Fire Station 23, where all record books were kept in the hayloft. Sharing the top floor with the association was the Los Angeles Firemen's Credit Union which remained there until 1970 when both organizations moved to a new building at 2900 West Temple Street. Also located on the third floor was what was then designated as the arson bureau, created in 1918, and the old bureau of photography, organized in 1926. Fire Station 28's basement saw many uses, too, including the LAFD's band rehearsal hall and as a driving range for fire department golfers. The house was closed as a fire station on June 15, 1969.

Fire Station 28's motorized rigs joined the LAFD fleet none-too-soon as a rash of major fires kept firefighters on the run, including the busiest day in the LAFD's history up to that time. Starting at 9 a.m., on the hot, windy day of September 17, 1913, the LAFD answered a record number of 31 alarms in 24 hours. Fires destroyed or damaged more than 19 buildings and called out 64 pieces of motorized and horse-drawn apparatus. Every station in the city saw action as fires pocked the downtown district as well as outlying residential areas.

The worst of the fires started at 9:10 a.m., when a basement blaze in the Sanborn Building, 526-528 South Main Street, spread throughout the multi-story brick building housing clothing, home furnishings and a desk company. Apparatus answering the three-alarmer used 40 hoselines, the Gorter tower and a nozzle operated from the end of an aerial ladder.

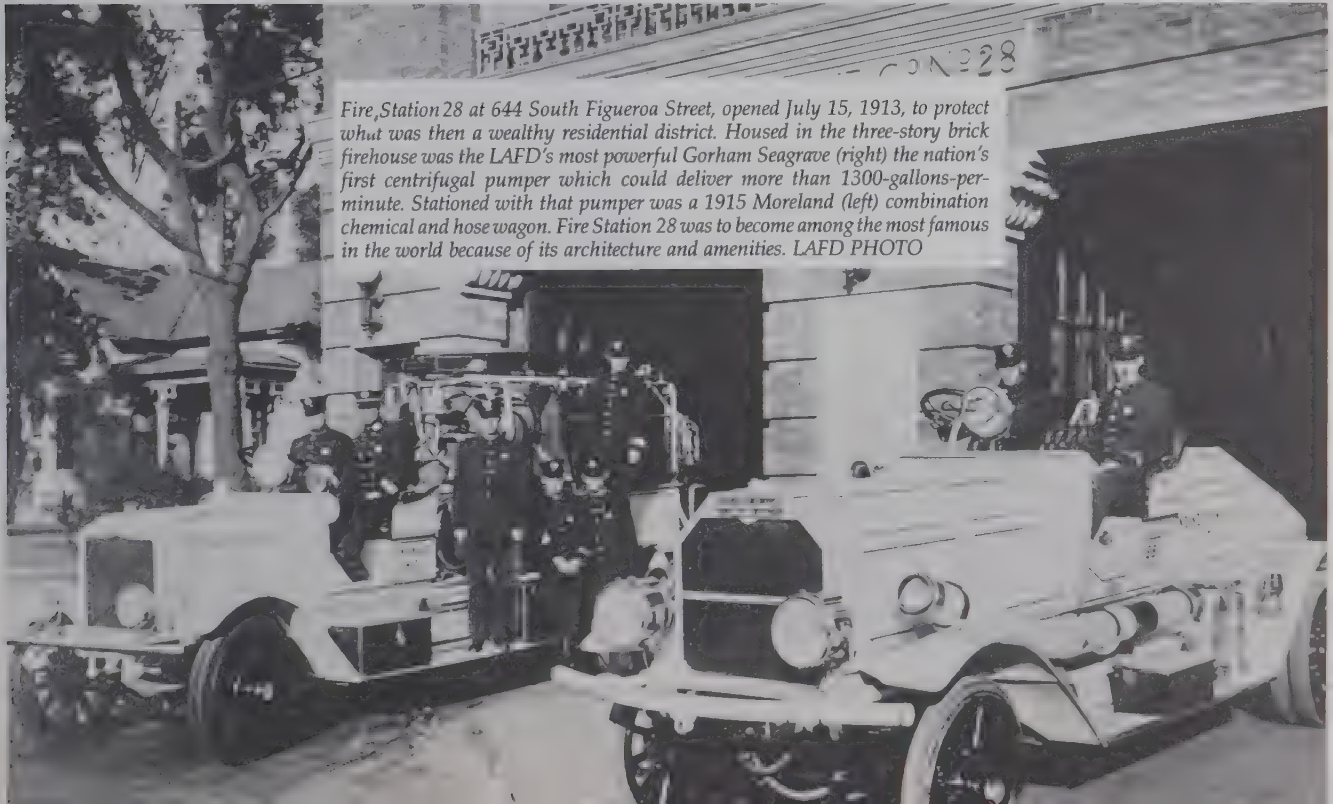
Barely was the Sanborn fire coming under control when firefighters were called early that afternoon to the Scott Shaving Company, a woodworking firm at Ninth Street and Santa Fe Avenue. Santa Ana-wind-driven flames wiped out the entire block, including Sanborn's, other commercial buildings, stables and houses in an area perimetered by Ninth and Tenth Streets, Santa Fe Avenue and the Santa Fe Railway tracks.

By day's end, 23 firefighters had been overcome by smoke or otherwise injured. Many of them were hospitalized, including Firefighter W. H. Feltman of Engine 9 who was struck by the Gorter's stream during the Sanborn fire.

Not only was that day a record for the LAFD, but it saw a new high for water consumption. "It was the greatest demand we ever had to meet," said Superintendent William Mulholland of the Los Angeles Water Company. "Consumption jumped 15 million gallons. We used 75 million gallons during the day; several million gallons more than was ever before used by the city in one day. It wasn't altogether because of the fires. The heat caused people to use water more freely than under ordinary circumstances."

Less than two months later, Mulholland, chief engineer and builder of the Los Angeles Owens River Aqueduct, together with a crowd of Angelenos, proudly watched on November 5, 1913, as tens of thousands of gallons of clear water gushed into a San Fernando reservoir to officially celebrate the completion of the 233-mile aqueduct. By gravity flow, runoff water from the Owens River Valley in the High Sierra Mountains was now available to Los Angeles.

Although the city's water problems were far from over, firefighters would no longer be forced to rely upon the unde-



Fire Station 28 at 644 South Figueroa Street, opened July 15, 1913, to protect what was then a wealthy residential district. Housed in the three-story brick firehouse was the LAFD's most powerful Gorham Seagrave (right) the nation's first centrifugal pumper which could deliver more than 1300-gallons-per-minute. Stationed with that pumper was a 1915 Moreland (left) combination chemical and hose wagon. Fire Station 28 was to become among the most famous in the world because of its architecture and amenities. LAFD PHOTO pendable Los Angeles River and the zanja system. Completion of the aqueduct was a benchmark in the history of Los Angeles' fire protection. It also created future problems. The abundance of water spurred Los Angeles' growth. On May 14, 1915, Los Angeles annexed the first 168 of an eventual 217-square-miles of the San Fernando Valley — probably the largest single annexation of land by a city in American history. With the valley part of Los Angeles, the LAFD would be confronted with unparalleled fire protection problems, especially after World War II, when the agricultural valley gave way to cities within the city and all the fire protection problems associated with urbanized areas.

Harbor communities, meanwhile, were protesting that they were orphans as far as the city fathers of Los Angeles were concerned. The rapidly-expanding harbor was not getting its share of fire protection. Mostly needed was a fireboat. The contract fire tugs, *Warrior* and *Falcon,* often were busy towing ships or docked without steam in their boilers when fire alarms were sounded. Two waterfront fires, several weeks apart, not only reinforced demands for a fireboat but further incensed businessmen who felt their taxes were going to improve fire protection in downtown Los Angeles, not the harbor.

The problem of inadequate harbor fire protection was compounded by labor unrest as 12 large lumber companies fought union attempts to organize their workers. Recalling what recently occurred at the ***Los Angeles Times*** bombing and fire, owners of lumber companies were seriously worried by threats the yards would be burned. At least one suspicious fire had already caused heavy damage. At 2:12 a.m., January 11, 1914, flames suddenly burst from the new drying shed of the E.K. Wood Lumber Company, one of the largest on San Pedro's waterfront. The fire quickly spread to the kiln and slopped over into the sprawling three-mile-long lumber storage yard.

San Pedro's Fire Chief Baly, his seven paid firefighters and 12 callmen were obviously overwhelmed by the extent of the unbelievably fast-moving fire. Long Beach and Los Angeles were asked for help. Eley sent motorized Engine 31, a 700-gallon-per-minute Gorham Seagrave and Engine 30, an 800-gallon-per-minute Nott steamer pulled by a motorized Seagrave tractor. The chief engineer then ordered horse-drawn Engines 4, 5, 16 and 23 to respond to the Alameda Street yard of the Southern Pacific Railroad where a train of flatcars stood ready to take them to the harbor.

Considering the distance, why did Eley send horse-drawn steamers, one motorized steam pumper and only one fully-motorized apparatus? Because he realized a sprawling lumber yard fire needed plenty of pumping power. The five steam pumpers could together guarantee close to 5000-gallons-per-minute flow. A train, moreover, could get the horse-drawn companies to the harbor almost as fast as motorized apparatus.

The animals obediently pulled the steamers up a ramp and onto the flatcars. With the firefighters clinging to the apparatus, the horses stood patiently as the train raced to San Pedro and arrived shortly before 3 a.m. Horses of Engines 4 and 5 backed their steamers onto a barge and the animals were unhitched and safely tied to posts.

The steamers were barged to the fire where they dropped their hard suctions overboard, began drafting and quickly had four lines in action. Although the contract fire tug *Warrior's* two streams began battering the flames, too, the fact that the boat did not show up until after downtown LAFD equipment was pumping was not overlooked by harborites. It is not known if the *Falcon* answered the alarm.

Eley took command of LAFD operations while two Long Beach engines joined the battle. Eley saw they needed more apparatus. Not choosing to deplete downtown fire protection, but needing help quickly, Eley called for Hollywood's Engine 27, a 700-gallon-per-minute Gorham Seagrave, which made fast time to the fire. Flames raged for eight hours while destroying the lumber yard's new building and up to eight million board feet of lumber. Police sought union leaders of the International Workers of the World for questioning, but could not find them. The cause of the $250,000 fire was listed as arson.

The waterfront area was again hit by a severe fire on the night of October 26, 1914, when flames were discovered in the Crescent Wharf and Warehouse in East San Pedro (Terminal Island). The fire quickly communicated to the California Fish Company sardine cannery in Fish Harbor, a billiard hall, a restaurant and the post office. Baly again called for help and Acting Chief Engineer O'Donnell sent two motorized pumpers. There was little to do when they arrived. The wharf, cannery and other structures were a mass of smoking rubble. Baly said the cannery could have been saved and the fire confined to the wharf if only they had a fireboat.

LAFD PHOTO

Although the LAFD had a small fireboat, the Aeolian, the craft did not have the pumping capacity of a badly-needed boat capable of delivering large volumes of water. Until a big fireboat could be acquired, two steamers, an Amoskeag and a Nott, were kept in reserve at Fire Station 36 in San Pedro. When needed, the steamers were loaded onto a barge and a tug towed them to the fire. The pumpers together could deliver in excess of 1300-gallons-per-minute of water.

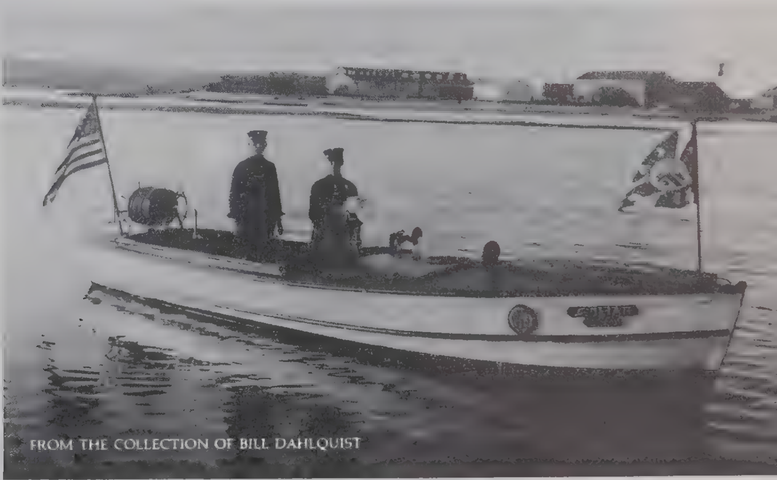
Harbor businessmen and residents may have been disenchanted with the downtown political structure, but they had a friend — and a persistent friend at that — in the chief engineer's office. In his next annual report for the year ending June 30, 1916, Eley reemphasized earlier recommendations for the purchase "without delay" of "a modern fireboat with a capacity of not less than 9000 gallons-per-minute, in order to give adequate fire protection to shipping, including the eight miles of wharfage and millions of dollars worth of property in such wharves at the Los Angeles harbor, as the present method of fighting fires at the harbor is entirely inadequate to cope with any serious fire."

The council deleted Eley's fireboat request, but he stationed two motorized companies in the harbor: Auto Chemical No. 6 in the old Beacon Street City Hall and a similar motorized company in a frame house built in East San Pedro (Terminal Island). The following year Eley was successful in his budget request for a fireboat which was probably built in Seattle. The boat was not at all what Eley ideally sought, but at least it was a start.

Replacing the contracted *Falcon* fire tug, the wooden fireboat resembled a low-to-the-water launch and was around 25-feet-long, had a 60-gallon chemical tank, an aft-mounted hose reel and carried a short roof ladder for accessing wharves. The boat was named the *Aeolian*. (Bill Dahlquist, a member of the LAFD historical committee, learned that the name referred to the mythological Greek god of the winds, or the musical tone produced by the wind, as well as to Greeks living along the coast of Asia minor.) Where the *Aeolian* was berthed and what eventually happened to it is not known.

Obviously still without the capability for fighting major waterfront fires, Eley persisted in his recommendations for an effective fireboat. Again rebuffed, he did what firefighters have traditionally done. Eley came up with a make-do solution which demonstrated his masterful insight into what was needed and was largely based upon what he had observed at the E.K. Wood Lumber Company fire. On April 17, 1917, Eley ordered two heavy-duty steam pumpers, an Amoskeag and a Nott, sent to the harbor and stationed at Engine 36 which had opened at 630 South Beacon Street. Four firefighters were assigned to the rigs.

Waterfront alarms sent Engine 36 firefighters and the two engines to a barge berthed at the foot of San Pedro's First Street. Steam pressure was raised to pumping capabilities by the time the horses got the two engines on the barge. A tug pulled the two steamer/fireboat to the fire. Together, the steamers could deliver at least 1200-gallons-per-minute.


FROM THE COLLECTION OF BILL DAHLQUIST

The LAFD's first fireboat, the Aeolian, *went in service by 1918. The wooden craft had a stern-mounted hose reel, a 60-gallon chemical tank and a short roof ladder on the bow. The ladder was used for climbing onto wharves.*

Further buttressing harbor fire protection, Eley that year authorized a total of nine volunteer fire companies with LAFD supplied hand-drawn chemical engines and hose reels: two in San Pedro with 50 volunteer firefighters; three in Wilmington with 15 volunteers and four on Terminal Island with eight volunteers. The Southern Pacific, the Los Angeles Ship Building Company and other firms with large harbor investments maintained private fire brigades which, when needed, helped LAFD paid and volunteer firefighters.

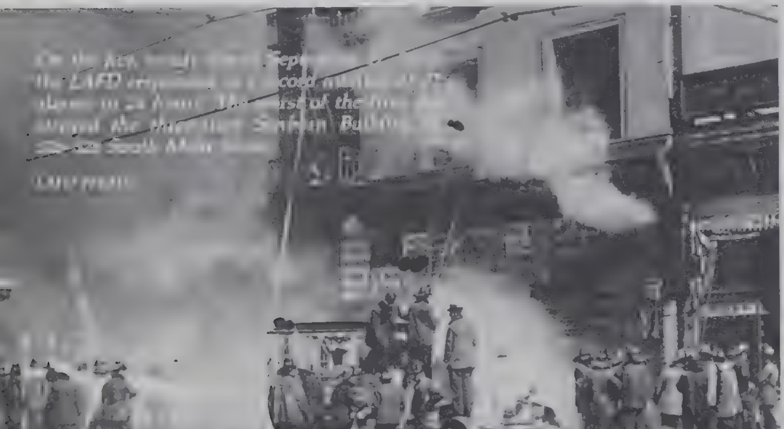
Two years later, Eley came close to getting council approval for a fireboat of the type he had been requesting when $3300 was approved for the purchase of a 64.5 foot, 2500-gallon-per-minute, wooden, single-propeller boat powered by four gasoline engines. Built by the Marine Equipment Company on Mormon Island in the harbor, the boat had three deck-mounted turret guns for master stream use, eight hose outlets and a large reel of two-and-one-half-inch hose. The boat, which made its maiden run on June 19, 1919, was located at Berth 89 at the foot of First Street, San Pedro, and was crewed by nine firefighters.

Firefighters assigned to the boat lived in tents until a station was built shortly thereafter. If the chief engineer never got the powerful boat he worked so hard and so long to add to the LAFD's fleet, he at least had the satisfaction of knowing the boat was, for a short time, unofficially named the *Archie J. Eley*.

All of which does not suggest that Eley's total focus was upon the harbor. There was much to be learned and done as the department came closer to full motorization. In 1915, there were only 80 horses remaining in the LAFD. No more would be bought. There was better fire protection to be organized in areas surrounding the legal fire limits of the city, including volunteer companies on the west side, in Mount Washington and in the newly-annexed San Fernando Valley.

Most of all, there were the major adjustments necessitated by the electorate's 3-to-1 approval, June 1, 1915, of Ordinance 32,438, creating a two-shift, or platoon, system which became effective August 1. The day shift began at 8 a.m., and ended at 6 p.m. Then the night shift relieved until the next morning. Dayshifters switched hours with the night-shifters at seven-day intervals. The ordinance also forbade any firefighter from being forced to work two consecutive shifts, except in the event of a conflagration or other disaster. The two-platoon ordinance was referred to as "the most humane act ever experienced in the fire department." That was perhaps true, considering the long hours and days firefighters were required to work in previous years. The new system meant that firefighters for the first time could look forward to some semblance of a family and social life.

In practice, however, the system had severe drawbacks. The ordinance authorized the hiring of at least 25 additional firefighters, who were referred to as substitutes. But the LAFD needed many more men than that to make the system work. The law, therefore, slashed fire station staffing capabilities so severely that 10 houses were almost immediately closed: Engines 5, 17, 18, 21, 32 and 33; Trucks 3 and 4 and Hose Companies 2 and 5. Night watchmen were hired to guard the deserted fire stations. The two-platoon system became highly-controversial. Los Angeles needed more stations, more firefighters, not less. As was quickly learned, two platoons literally created two autonomous fire departments in one city. Day shift firefighters laid off routine work onto night-shifters and vice versa.



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LAFD PHOTO

Forrest W. Moore, who joined the LAFD on May 1, 1915, when he reported for duty at Engine 35, rose through the ranks during the next 52 years until his retirement, January 4, 1967, as an assistant chief. He served the LAFD longer than any other firefighter; a record that is unlikely to be surpassed.

Among the fire stations Eley opened in 1915 was Engine 35, then at 1314 North Vermont Avenue in the Hollywood district. A motorized Seagrave combination chemical and hose apparatus was housed in the station at 5:30 p.m., May 1, when a lanky 22-year-old rookie by the name of Forrest W. Moore reported to Lieut. William A. Burns for his first tour of duty. Nobody, of course, realized it at the time, but that day marked the start of another unprecedented legend in the history of the LAFD.

Moore, who rose through the ranks to become an assistant chief, served the department longer than any other firefighter: 52 years until his January 4, 1967, retirement. The only thing Moore seemed to enjoy more than fighting fires was to reminisce with firefighters, regardless of their rank or years of service. Moore was a LAFD raconteur without peer. His more than half-century of service is a record that is unlikely to be surpassed. Retired Assistant Chief Moore died, January 20, 1973.

On June 16, 1916, the City Council approved Ordinance 34,352 creating a bureau of fire prevention and public safety, effective July 20. Capt. Charles J. Hawley was the bureau's first head. What was to become one of the major functions of the LAFD and to make the department world-renowned throughout the fire service community for fire prevention laws, public education and other fire safety innovations and programs, started on a small scale. Hawley's staff included only a fire prevention engineer, a deputy fire prevention engineer and a few fire inspectors. Six unpaid inspectors, selected from outside the department, assisted them.

Sharply contrasting the bureau's later wide-ranging programs, its early workload was without enforcement powers and was mostly limited to reducing fire problems in garages, elevators and commercial occupancies. To aid inspectors' work, Eley, in 1916, created what was then referred to as drafting and maps (later maps and drafting). The bureau's lack of enforcement powers was corrected, starting in 1917, by council action. That year, inspectors made fire prevention presentations in 283 city schools and to workers in motion picture

1901 ENGINE No 5

On July 20, 1916, the Bureau of Fire Prevention and Safety started operations. What was to become one of the LAFD's major functions started with only a few inspectors, but the bureau quickly grew in size as the effectiveness of their work became renowned throughout the fire service.

studios, department stores and other business and commercial establishments. By April 16, 1918, the bureau had grown to 25 inspectors.

As fire prevention efforts and responsibilities increased, Eley that year formed an arson bureau and made it a part of fire prevention. Lieut. Eugene H. Enos, a firefighter recovering from injuries, was appointed as the first arson investigator with commission approval on January 18, 1918. Assisting him was a police department detective. During the arson bureau's first years, 125 fires classified as unknown origin were investigated and 29 of them were found to be incendiary. Arrests and convictions resulted in nearly every case.

The fire prevention bureau was becoming well-organized by the time the United States entered World War I on April 6, 1917. The war heavily impacted the department as more than 125 of the department's 620 officers and men were granted indefinite leaves of absence when they enlisted or were drafted. The fire commission voted to extend those leaves up to one year after the war ended. LAFD firefighters who went off to war retained their rank and the military time they served was added to their pension credits.

With around one out of six LAFD members serving their country, Eley addressed the manpower shortage by reducing fire prevention bureau personnel and making manpower adjustments in the stations. Eley sought to raise the maximum age of new firefighters from 35 to 45, but the Civil Service Department refused. Station manpower cutbacks heightened the risks of fireground injuries as firefighters were required to do tasks which normally required more men. To help his depleted manpower avoid commonplace injuries such as strains and sprains, Eley instituted what may have been the department's first official physical fitness program. Morning and evening exercises for day and night platoons were led by officers in every firehouse.

Faster transition of the department from horse-drawn apparatus to automotive equipment was curtailed as makers turned out military vehicles, including trucks and tanks. Eley's wartime problems in protecting the city against fire were further compounded by the fact that at least 40 per cent of Los Angeles was without fire alarm boxes. Like most chiefs of that era, Eley considered telephones unreliable and a second choice when sending in alarms. He recommended that the city add 900 more fireboxes to the system.

Eley's wartime firefighting resources were, therefore, severely strained when a major Hollywood Hills brush fire erupted in Laurel Canyon near Lookout Mountain on the Fourth of July, 1917. Children, picnicking with their parents, set off fireworks which ignited brush just outside the city limits. Eley led firefighters, assisted by department volunteers, in containing the flames to an area three-quarters of a mile long and a quarter-of-a-mile wide. All but one of the picnickers fled safely. Mrs. Elizabeth Moore, 28, widow of a Chicago Fire Department firefighter who had recently been killed in a major fire, was trapped in the brush and fatally burned.

Firefighters who avidly followed the progress of the war in the daily newspapers were stunned, August 20, 1917, by headlines which reported that Chief Engineer Eley had been arrested on embezzlement charges following a secret grand jury investigation and two-count indictments. The case involved two checks, totaling $621, which had been entrusted to Eley's care during the terminal illness of Firefighter Theodore O'Neill. Both checks had been cashed. Eley said he had handwritten receipts for the checks and that they were signed by the deceased firefighter. Eley posted $2500 bail and was suspended by Mayor Frederick T. Woodworth at Eley's request until the matter was cleared. Assistant Chief O'Donnell was named acting chief engineer.

Eley pleaded not guilty and trial began in Superior Court with firefighters contributing to his defense fund. Conflicting testimony by handwriting experts, who could not agree that the receipts were forged, resulted in a hung jury which voted, six-to-six. At the second trial the jury again deadlocked, seven-to-five for Eley's acquittal. Deputy District Attorney Edward Selph dismissed the charges. After his self-imposed eight-month suspension, Eley was reinstated, effective April 8, and was voted $2000 in back pay.

Another problem, meanwhile, confronted Eley. The day after Eley's indictment, the Republican Protective League, an organization of blacks, accused the chief engineer of racial bigotry. They charged he failed to appoint at least some of the 50 blacks who had passed the civil service examination. Largely because of the war, there were 24 openings, with more occurring almost weekly. White candidates were refusing appointments because they knew they would likely lose their jobs when firefighters returned from the war.

The City Council on September 4, 1917, instructed the fire commission to transfer white firefighters from Fire Station 30 at 1401 South Central Avenue, and reassign them to other houses. Fire Station 30 was ordered to become an all-black firefighters' station. Acting Chief Engineer O'Donnell balked. He said neither the council nor the commissioners had the legal right to assign personnel. Only the LAFD administration had that power. Engine 30, moveover, required an engineer. O'Donnell reminded commissioners and councilmen that the city's Engineering Department had a policy of refusing to certify blacks as engineers. Black firefighters were, moreover, trained to operate chemical hose companies and did not know how to use engines, said O'Donnell.

Racial tensions mounted as firefighters threatened to strike if blacks were assigned to Engine 30. The battle was a long one. On April 16, 1924, Engine 30 became a segregated all-black station and Fire Station 14 at 3401 South Central Avenue would become all-black, too, on November 2, 1936. Segregated stations only prolonged the inevitable time when the greatest upheaval in the department's history resulted in integration of firefighters, regardless of their ethnic background, into all firehouses.

Also confronting the department was the need for better fire protection in the San Fernando Valley as the availability of aqueduct water spurred increasing population and building density. Evidence of the problem occurred on September 12, 1917, when an explosion and fire destroyed half-a-block of buildings in the city of San Fernando's downtown district on Porter Avenue (San Fernando Road) between Maclay Street and Brand Boulevard.

Battalion Chief Charles Casey led Hose 1, a motorized Moreland combination chemical and hose company to San Fernando, after stopping at Hollywood Station 27 to pick up additional hose. The intervention of the LAFD, Burbank and Glendale Fire Departments was credited with saving San Fernando from a conflagration. On January 15, 1979, the LAFD took over fire protection and rescue-ambulance service in the city of San Fernando.

Locations of many of the valley's LAFD-supported volunteer fire stations are unknown or unclear because street names and locations changed as areas developed. By 1917, it is known that there was a hand-drawn hose reel station operated by LAFD volunteers at 415 Virginia (Sylvan) Avenue, Van Nuys. A second volunteer company consisted of a hand-drawn 60-gallon chemical engine with 100-feet of hose located in the Zelzah district in a station located at what was then the northwest corner of Canby Avenue and Eddy Street, but is now the foot of Canby and Parthenia Place.

The LAFD's first San Fernando Valley 24-hour, fully-manned and paid station of firefighters opened February 6, 1919, at the Van Nuys City Hall annex, 415 Sylvan Street — the site of the original volunteer firehouse. The address was later changed to 14415 Sylvan Street by the time old Fire Station 39 was replaced by a new house in 1939. Original 39's had five firefighters on each of two platoons. Their first apparatus was a motorized Seagrave chemical-hose wagon carrying 1500 feet of hose. Attached to the rear of the apparatus was a formerly horse-drawn Ahrens steamer rated at 550-gallons-per-minute.

With Eley's reinstatement and the November 11, 1918, ar-

LAFD PHOTO

A matched team of Morgan horses were assigned to this 85-foot spring-hoist Seagrave aerial ladder.

mistice which led to the end of World War I, firefighters began returning from military service. Apparatus again became available. Eley, renewing and accelerating his program for full motorization of the department, received authorization to purchase seven more auto engines. As of June 30, 1918, only 22 combination chemical and hose companies, two aerial ladders and the water tower were horse-drawn. In those twilight days of the horses, all pumpers were either powered by gasoline or were steamers attached to motorized tractors. So, too, did internal combustion engines power nine chemical engines, five trucks and other LAFD vehicles, including every chief's buggy. (The term "buggy" was to become traditional throughout the motorized era when referring to chiefs' cars.)

An analysis of the LAFD expenditures during 1917 and 1918 pointedly demonstrates the comparative costs of automotive equipment and horses. The LAFD annual report for the year ending June 30, 1918, shows total upkeep costs of horses amounted to $15,288.77, including $12,072.83 for hay, $2205.35 for barley and bran, plus $1011.39 for shoeing. Motorized maintenance costs totaled $8869.30; a remarkable comparison considering that motor apparatus far-outnumbered the department's horses.

As the department attritioned horses by auction or loans to the Street Department to pull garbage wagons and to the Parks Department to haul lawn mowers, many a tale was told of the horses' reaction to what firefighters considered demotions to menial, if not downright disgusting, tasks. Whether pulling garbage wagons, park mowers, milk wagons or delivery carts, stories flourished and were perhaps embellished as accounts described how horses, if left unattended or not tied to hitching posts, would chase after responding apparatus or otherwise react as they had been trained whenever the alarm bell clanged.

Among those stories was that of Snowball, said to be the oldest Percheron in the department, who was loaned to the Parks Department. Snowball was pulling a lawn mower in South Park, near Fire Station 22, then at 4352 South Main Street, when he heard Engine 22's siren and bell and saw the pumper hurry past while answering an alarm. Close behind came Engine 21.

"Snowball stood still for a second," said the park gardener, who added that the horse's ears quivered. "Then his proud old head dropped and he would not pull the devil (mower) a bit more that day. The next morning when I went to hitch him up again, there the poor beast lay — dead as a nit — rest his soul. I think his heart was broken." Snowball's death was duly noted by the fire commission: "Firehorse No. 129, loaned to the Park Department May 9, 1918, died at South Park, January 20, 1919."

Lack of funding prevented faster motorization. The rapidly-sprawling city, coupled with the aging horses, was taking its toll, especially when the animals were required to make long runs as second or greater alarms took them far from their districts. On June 19, 1919, a second alarm called Engine 13, stationed at 2669 West Pico Boulevard, to an oil field fire at Fourth and Coronado Streets. While responding, Engine 13's Blacktail, a 22-year-old veteran firehorse, collapsed and died at Sixth Street and Westlake Avenue. Blacktail's death was one more reminder that the run would have posed no problem for a motorized pumper. His death left only 51 horses in the department.

Eley, himself, realized that, like the horses, his service days were numbered. With 27 years on the job, nine of them as chief engineer — the longest tenure of any chief up to that time — Eley, at 56, no doubt wondered whether his old nemesis — a basement fire — would ultimately result in his last alarm. Around 7 p.m., May 10, 1919, a basement fire in the four-story brick Hotel Portsmouth, 516 ½ South Hill Street, across from Pershing Square, resulted in a three-alarmer.

Taking command, Eley directed the evacuation of 110 guests from the smoke-filled hotel before joining firefighters in the fiercely hot and murky basement which was heavily stocked with goods stored by department stores nearby. Eley tripped and fell over hose he could not see in the smoke. The badly injured chief engineer was carried from the basement by firefighters and rushed to the receiving hospital. Doctors found that Eley had suffered two broken ribs and internal injuries. They ordered him to go home and recuperate. Eley returned to the fire and resumed command. By 10 o'clock the fire was controlled. The incendiary fire caused $50,000 in losses to the hotel and the first floor stores of Dawson Books, Norris' Cafeteria and the Royers Framing Shop.

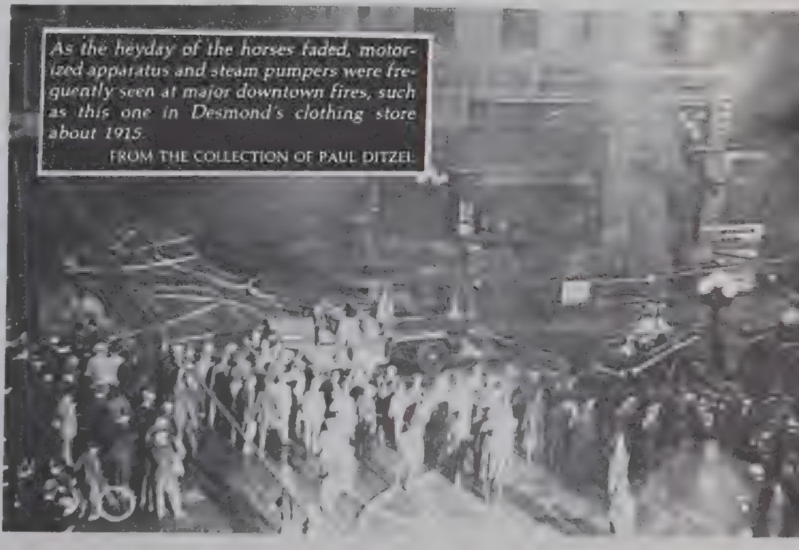
REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Lieut. Roman W. Ritters
Engine 1
Died from burns suffered in a brush fire
June 20, 1919

Exactly six weeks later, Lieut. Roman W. Ritters of Engine 1 died of burns suffered June 9, during a Marmion Way and Pasadena Avenue brush fire. The Portsmouth fire, the death of Ritters and years of fireground injuries, no doubt largely influenced Eley's decision to retire, effective July 17, 1919. Assistant Chief O'Donnell was named acting chief engineer.

Eley's announcement touched off weeks of speculation on who his successor would be. The candidate most often mentioned was none other than Deputy Sheriff Walter Lips. The former chief engineer seemed like a shoe-in, considering that he was an old and staunch friend of Mayor-Elect Meredith P. Snyder. Lips had named a fire horse after Snyder when he first served as mayor from 1900 to 1904. The likelihood of Lips' return touched off a controversy when Former Mayor George Alexander, who had fired Lips, said he would bring charges against him if Lips was named chief engineer. Alexander refused to specify those charges.

As the political tempest swirled and Los Angeles wondered who the next chief engineer would be, the department continued to replace its fire horses with motor equipment. As the final days of the horses approached, a council-appointed committee of women and LAFD officials voted, April 21, 1921, to pension all remaining fire horses and to retire them to pasture


As the heyday of the horses faded, motorized apparatus and steam pumpers were frequently seen at major downtown fires, such as this one in Desmond's clothing store about 1915.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF PAUL DITZEL

Blackie and other fire horses retired to pasture were often visited by firefighters, especially drivers who surely yearned for the colorful era of the horse-drawn apparatus.

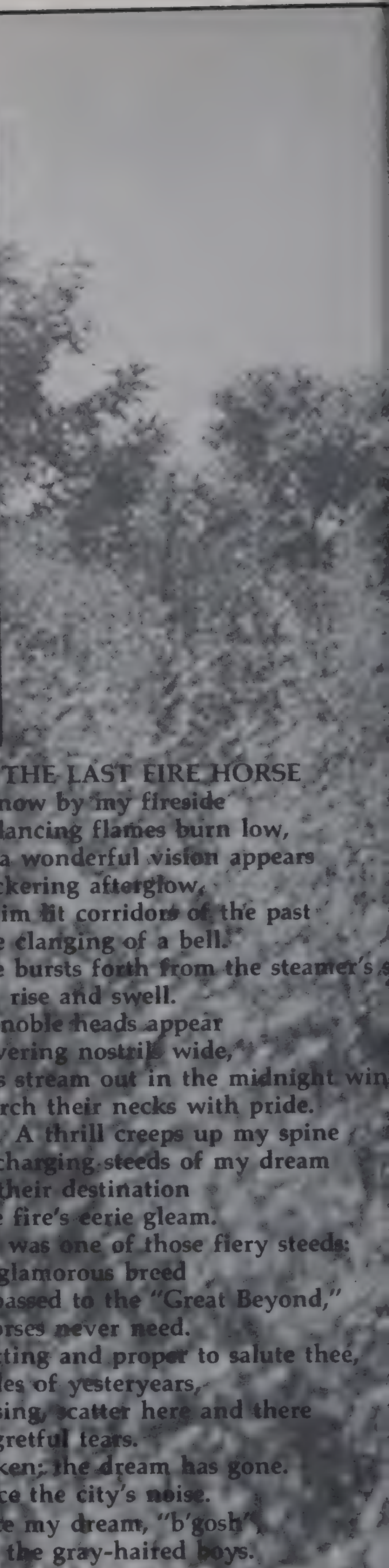
FROM THE COLLECTION OF MARX C. SCOTT

in Griffith Park. In July, two months later, the LAFD became fully-motorized when the last horses were replaced by 10 Seagrave pumpers and nine Seagrave combination chemical and hose wagons.

Firefighters, especially drivers of the last horses, often visited the animals in Griffith Park. Invariably, they brought apples, carrots, celery and lumps of sugar. Members of the women's committe similary journeyed to the park with treats for the horses which would never be forgotten, even as they died, one-by-one, until only Blackie remained. Oldtimers recalled that Blackie was part of the runaway team when Engine 3's driver slept through a 1907 alarm to Box 34 at San Pedro and Third Streets. Engineer William W. Tebbets climbed over the boiler and took control of the horses. Later, Blackie was assigned to Engine 17 and was then sent to Engine 23, along with Searchlight and Jerry and Fire Eater, when the firehouse was opened in 1910.

In retirement, Blackie became more of a celebrity than he was during his service years. For four years, starting in 1931, the fire prevention bureau used a Seagrave engine with its hose bed removed to haul Blackie to city schools where he delighted children as they listened to home and school fire safety lectures. On December 27, 1933, Blackie was the guest of honor at a meeting of the Breakfast Club, an organization of community leaders. Four years later, Blackie wore a wreath of flowers around his neck while he stood as part of a fire department contingent during a tree-planting ceremony in Lafayette Park.

On November 6, 1939, every firehouse bell tolled 10 times: the traditional announcement of the death of an active or retired firefighter. Blackie, 37-years-old, was found dead that day in Griffith Park. Probably the most fitting requiem for the hundreds of horses which had served the Los Angeles Fire Department for more than 35 years was that written by Firefighter Donald L. Bluntach of Salvage 28 shortly after Blackie's death:

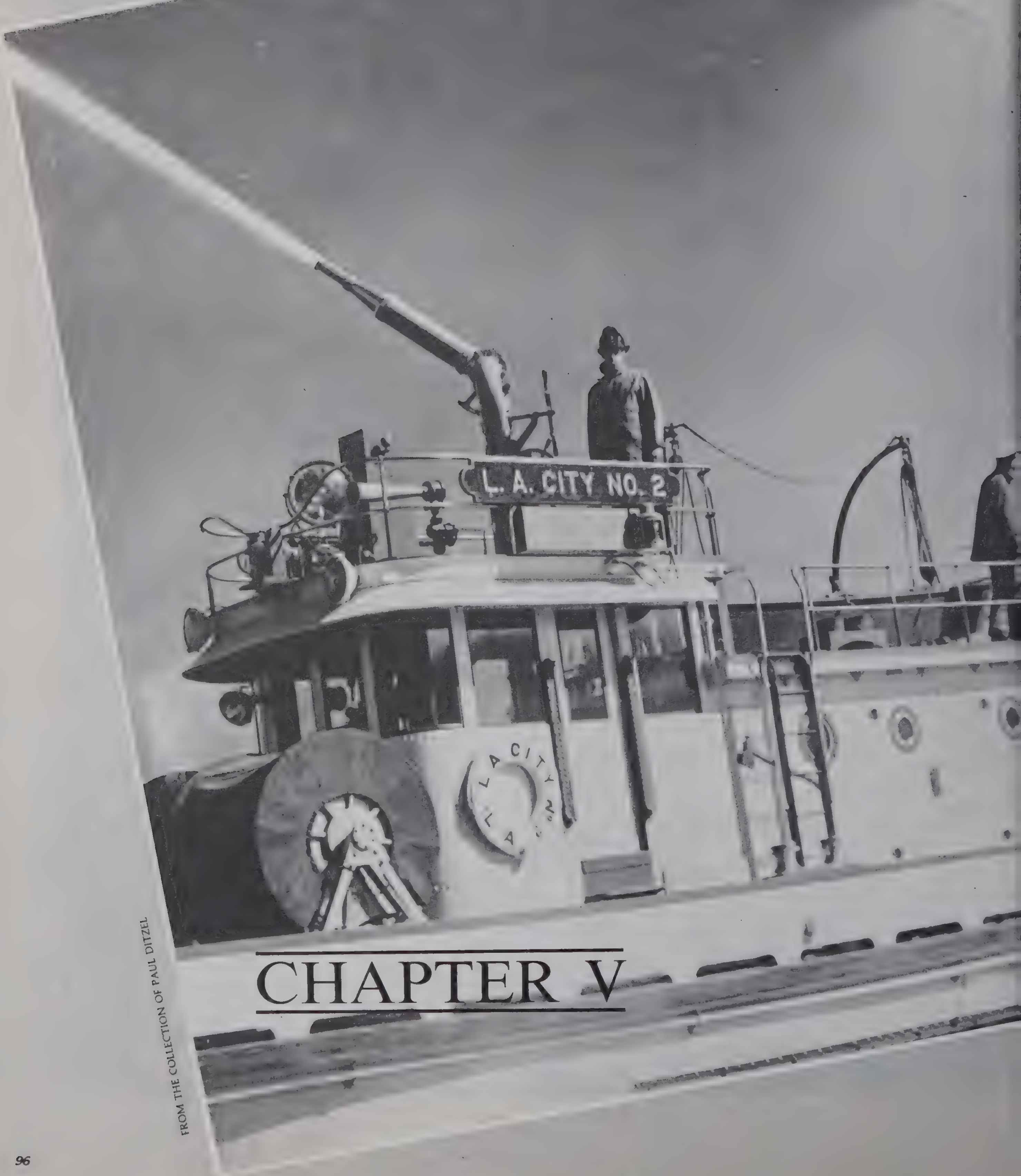


THE LAST FIRE HORSE

As I sit me now by my fireside
And the dancing flames burn low,
I doze, and a wonderful vision appears
In the flickering afterglow,
Down the dim lit corridors of the past
Comes the clanging of a bell.
Black smoke bursts forth from the steamer's
To slowly rise and swell.
Then three noble heads appear
With quivering nostrils wide,
Black manes stream out in the midnight win
As they arch their necks with pride.
Ah! Me! . . . A thrill creeps up my spine
As these charging steeds of my dream
Roar on to their destination
Lit by the fire's eerie gleam.
Old Blackie was one of those fiery steeds:
Last of a glamorous breed
That have passed to the "Great Beyond,"
Where horses never need.
Then 'tis fitting and proper to salute thee,
O comrades of yesteryears,
And in passing, scatter here and there
A few regretful tears.
Now I awaken; the dream has gone.
In its place the city's noise.
But I'll write my dream, "b'gosh",
To please the gray-haired boys.

Every LAFD firehouse bell tolled 10 times on November 6, 1939, with the traditional announcement of the death of an active or retired firefighter. Blackie, 37, the sole surviving horse, was found dead that day in Griffith Park.

LAFD PHOTO



Fireboat 2, the Ralph J. Scott, is one of the world's most powerful fireboats. The oldest first-line piece of equipment on the LAFD roster, Fireboat 2 is capable of delivering 18,655 gallons-per-minute at 150 pounds pump pressure. The boat was commissioned on December 2, 1925.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF PAUL DITZEL

CHAPTER V

THE NEW LOOK IN THE OLD DEPARTMENT

Mayor Meredith P. Snyder made a surprise announcement on July 15, 1919, two days before the retirement of Chief Engineer Eley. Los Angeles and its firefighters fully expected that Snyder would name his friend, Walter Lips, as chief engineer. Lips would turn in his Los Angeles County deputy sheriff's badge and again become chief engineer. He had held the post from 1905 until 1910 when Mayor George Alexander fired him for reasons which were never fully-explained.

The new chief engineer was not Lips, whose candidacy had aroused considerable opposition among city politicians, but an acting battalion chief in downtown District 1. His name was Ralph J. Scott. How Scott came into Snyder's favor is not known. The mayor would only say that Scott was the youngest of all candidates he and the commissioners had considered. All others were nearing retirement age.

Scott, who had served the LAFD for 14 years, was relatively unknown politically and elsewhere in the city. Born in Minneapolis, April 1, 1884, his jet-black hair helped to make him look younger than his 34 years. Scott joined the LAFD, July 1, 1905, for no other reason than he needed a job and the department seemed to promise a steady one. He recalled the time his father, a railroad bridge construction engineer, had been a Winnipeg firefighter. Perhaps as great an attraction was Scott's interest in horses. The LAFD had more than 100 of them when he joined the department. His immediate goal was to become a driver; a promotion he achieved on August 10, 1906, a year after he became a firefighter.

When his favorite horse, Bullets, was retired after 22 years of service, Scott went to the city auction and bought him. It is ironic to note that Scott, so devoted to horses, was to preside over the LAFD's July 1, 1921, retirement of them as he completed the job of motorization started during his predecessor's administration. As much as he liked horses, Scott was an ambitious man, too. On May 31, 1909, he was promoted to lieutenant and then to captain on November 17, 1913.

Much of Scott's service was at Fire Station 23 from the time it opened in 1910. He spent many hours studying books on fire protection in the second-floor recreation room's library; a collection which had been started in 1899 by Chief Engineer Moore. A bachelor when the mayor named him chief engineer, Scott lived with his mother and sister at 2531 East Third Street. Shortly after his appointment, he married Adeline Haas. Station 23's third floor chief's quarters was to be their home for seven years.

A slight problem precluded Scott's appointment. As an acting battalion chief he was ineligible, under civil service rules, for appointment as chief engineer. That dilemma was quickly remedied. One day before he took office, Scott was appointed battalion chief and served for 24 hours until he became chief engineer, July 18, 1919.

Announcing Scott's appointment, the mayor said, "He is young, he is vigorous and has an excellent reputation. He is well-liked by the members of the department and has made a close study of firefighting and protective methods. He is a man with ideas." Scott was indeed a man of many ideas and he lost no time in starting to implement them.

LAFD PHOTO

Ralph J. Scott was appointed chief engineer on July 18, 1919, and served until April 1, 1940. Scott's administration was the longest in LAFD history.

Scott's administration marked the beginning of a new look in the old department. In Los Angeles, as elsewhere, fire chiefs traditionally were leather-lunged firefighters who personally led their men into battle in the thickest of smoke and flames. Scott had demonstrated his fireground abilities, but they were secondary to the keystone of his belief that fire chiefs best served their departments and their communities by focusing their protection efforts before fires had a chance to start.

Scott conceived the idea that a fire chief should be, first-and-foremost, an administrator and a long-range planner anticipating and preparing for future problems which the department would be ready to solve when they occurred. His administration signaled the start of a new breed of fire chiefs who brought the term professionalism, into the fire service. Muscle power would, of course, continue to be a primary ingredient of this new recipe, but brainpower was going to be no less important. During the more than two decades that Scott served as chief engineer he became internationally-renowned as one of the supreme authorities on fire department administration, fire protection and fire prevention.

A fountain of ideas — all of which would be implemented — spouted from the fertile imagination of this gifted man: new ways to reduce losses by preventing fires through extensive use of public education, public relations and photography. Scott reached the masses with fire prevention messages produced with the aid of Hollywood talent.

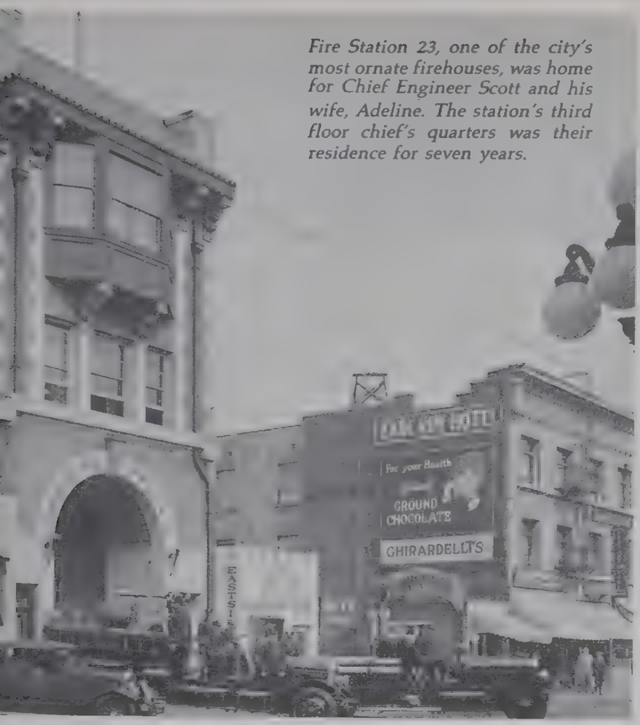
When fires inevitably occurred, losses could be reduced by minimizing water damage which, as history showed, could cause more losses than the flames themselves. Fire cause investigation which could serve as a deterrent to arson, advanced training, and firefighter education and better communications, including the use of radio-equipped apparatus, were among his accomplishments.

For major fires, Scott's ideas ranged from apparatus with quick-hitting capability at unheard of pumping pressures and volumes in Los Angeles' high-value districts to a fireboat which could deliver more water at greater pressure than nearly any other boat in the world. Scott was, moreover, a pioneer in providing fire department rescue and ambulance service. Testimony to the fruition of Scott's realized dreams of new fire prevention and firefighting methods is the fact that many of his innovations were adopted by departments throughout the United States.

Scott's 21-year tenure — the longest of any chief engineer in the LAFD's first century of service — came close to being the shortest. Chief engineer for only three weeks, Scott and his driver, Frank Harry Rothermel, were answering a 10 a.m. alarm, August 7, 1919, at the California Chocolate Shops, Inc., 743 Santee Street, where 15 women workers and four firefighters were overcome by ammonia spewing from a broken refrigerator pipe.

Responding south on San Pedro Street, a westbound automobile suddenly entered the intersection at Fourth Street.

Chief Engineer Scott, a former driver during the days of horse-drawn apparatus, bought his favorite horse, Bullets, when the Percheron was auctioned after 22 years of fire duty. Bullets was stabled at the Mountain Patrol. The chief frequently accompanied patrolmen while they made their rounds of the brush-covered mountains and canyons.



Fire Station 23, one of the city's most ornate firehouses, was home for Chief Engineer Scott and his wife, Adeline. The station's third floor chief's quarters was their residence for seven years.

Rothermel could not avoid the violent collision. The impact lipped the chief engineer's car upside down and it skidded on ts top for more than 150 feet. Scott walked away with minor cuts and bruises. Rothermel, who one day would become a deputy chief, suffered a broken jaw, a left shoulder fracture nd the loss of seven teeth.

Scott became chief engineer of the department with 57 pieces of in-service apparatus and 726 firefighters ill-equipped to protect 850,000 people. Los Angeles sprawled for nearly 400 square miles, with scattered high-value districts, including the downtown area, the harbor and Hollywood where ever-larger inderbox sound stages and false-front wooden scenery sets were being built.

Of equivalent disaster potential was the fast-developing San Fernando Valley and the vast expanses of rugged hill and mountain topography in Griffith Park and the Hollywood Hills along the Santa Monica Mountain range. Those hills, mountains and canyons were overgrown with tall and highly-flammable brush. Los Angeles' 3000 fires a year were increasng as were losses exceeding $1,600,000. No one knew better han Scott that he was confronting major fire protection chalenges which were without parallel in the history of the American fire service.

The rapidity with which Scott proposed improvements eaves no doubt that he had given much thought to these problems long before he became chief engineer. Scott first addressed the high risks in the harbor area, where 162 fires that year caused losses of $131,925. He took the fire commissioners with him to look over the waterfront. They were aghast at the disaster potential; the exact reaction Scott desired when he purposefully asked them to accompany him.

On that harbor inspection day, August 1, 1919, the fireboat was commissioned. Instead of the tentative name, *Archie J. Eley,* the chief engineer suggested that the boat be named the *Meredith,* after the mayor. Snyder, perhaps recalling his chagrin when the rookie fire horse that Lips named after him had flunked probation and was sold, demurred. The commission voted to name the craft Fireboat No. 1 and that future fireboats would be sequentially numbered. After that inspection trip, Scott knew he would have no trouble obtaining commission approval for more land-based fire companies, too.

Another initial recommendation was the immediate reopening of the fire stations closed after the two-platoon system was implemented. The commission, the council and the mayor swallowed hard when they heard the cost — $110,000 — but they went along with Scott. He began to solve some of the faults of the two-platoon system by designating 24-hour shift duty for battalion chiefs. This change remedied the perceived fault of two autonomous departments by placing battalion chiefs in charge of day and night platoons.

On September 19, 1929, after a 90-day trial period during which firefighters overwhelmingly voted in favor of it, the entire department began the 24-hour on-duty A and B platoon system. Starting November 30, 1960, the department created the C platoon. Each platoon worked 24 hours every other day for three shifts and then was off-duty for four days.

When Scott added 25 more inspectors to the fire prevention bureau in 1929, another large expense, the council momentarily balked and demanded that the fire insurance companies pay the cost of the bureau or it would be closed down. Scott sought, and got, business and community support for retaining the bureau intact while at the same time expanding its services. Scott won his point by publicly pointing out that Los Angeles had tripled in size in recent years, largely because of the San Fernando Valley annexation. Population throughout the city had increased by almost 50 per cent. Despite that unparalleled growth, the efforts of the fire prevention bureau were largely responsible, Scott said, for cutting the city's per capita fire losses to $1.05, compared to a national average of $2.10.

When Scott learned of a statewide contest and trophy for the best 1920 fire prevention program, he decided to go after the prize. He coaxed the council into appropriating $4402.50 to hire 25 workers to clear vacant lots of grass and rubbish and an additional $2006 for postage and mailing of notices to lot owners to clean up their property or pay the costs of the city doing it for them. Scott shepherded the passage of an ordinance which would add these charges to property owners' tax bills. Fresno, not Los Angeles, won the first prize trophy. But Scott took great satisfaction when he reported that grass fires had been drastically reduced.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF

The LAFD's apparatus fleet grew rapidly during Chief Engineer Scott's administration. Pumpers, such as this American LaFrance, were usually tested, prior to acceptance, at Echo Park Lake.

Starting in 1920, Scott began producing a steadily lengthening high-priority list of improvements which led many city officials to conclude the chief engineer was an unrealistic dreamer. Scott insisted the city needed larger water mains, two new stations, reconstruction of many older stations, purchase of 47 engines, trucks and combination chemical and hose wagons, 10 Ford roadsters for chiefs and fire prevention bureau inspectors, six hose carts and eight hand-operated chemical rigs for eight new volunteer fire stations. Of equal priority was the need for 20,000 feet of two-and-one-half-inch cotton-jacketed rubber hose and 5000 feet of the new one-and-one-half-inch hose that was starting to become favored in the fire service.

Most of all, Los Angeles required a modern fire alarm system. Scott said 70 percent of the city was without fireboxes and he recommended the purchase of at least 1000 more. The system would, moreover, be city-owned, not leased from private companies whose boxes were unreliable. As an example, Scott cited the early morning, September 10, 1919, fire at the Pacific Electric Railway's warehouse and repair yard at Seventh and Alameda Streets.

The fire was quickly discovered and Box 231 at Seventh Street and Central Avenue was pulled. When apparatus did not arrive, workers telephoned the fire department. By then the old wood-and-brick building was well-involved. Scott arrived and immediately sent in a second alarm at Box 231. No companies came. Scott hurried to a telephone and called for a simultaneous third and fourth alarm. For lack of a proper-functioning alarm system, the building was destroyed with a loss of $200,000.

Scott said that if anybody doubted that Los Angeles was ripe for burning, they need look no further than the recently-burned hulk of the Shrine Auditorium. Starting at 3:01 p.m., January 11, 1920, when Box 989 at Figueroa Street and Jefferson Boulevard was pulled, it took only 30 minutes for the city's largest auditorium to collapse in ruins. The three-alarmer severely stressed LAFD resources as numerous vicinity fires in structures caused widespread additional damage in the block bounded by Jefferson Boulevard and Figueroa Streets and Royal and 32nd Streets. Six firefighters were nearly killed by falling brickwork as the Jefferson side of the Shrine toppled while they were trying to batter their way inside. Loss of the Shrine alone was estimated at $175,000.

Fire commissioners, councilmen and Mayor Snyder were impressed by Scott's command of facts and figures to support his insistence that the city had, since the 1886 start of the department, played a reactive role toward fire protection. Now it was time to become pro-active. And what was the price tag for these improvements in a department whose annual expenditures were $1,823,651.45? Without blinking an eye, Scott said he proposed to spend $2.5 million to bring the department even close to providing adequate, long-range protection.

The dynamic young chief convinced city officials, business groups, newspaper publishers and, most of all, the electorate. On November 8, 1922, the voters approved a $2,500,000 bond issue and gave Scott the wherewithal to carry out his programs. Shortly thereafter, bids went out for 18 triple combination pumpers with combination chemical and hose wagons, five 85-foot aerial ladders, five city service trucks, two chassis for foam-carrying tankers and two squad wagons.

Fourteen new bungalow and two-story stations also were on Scott's shopping list, as were the reconstruction of four firehouses, including Fire Station 3, which would be enlarged to accommodate the ever-growing needs of the fire prevention bureau and the general offices of the department. Even as these programs began, Scott was well into plans for what was to be

The Shrine Auditorium was destroyed, January 11, 1920, during a three-alarm blaze. Six firefighters were nearly killed by collapsing brickwork.

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Firefighter Harry J. Powell
Engine 9
Died when he was crushed
between apparatus and a trolley
November 19, 1922

one of the world's largest and most powerful fireboats which, ong after his death, would be named the *Ralph J. Scott.*

The fire department bond issue year was marred by the deaths in the line of duty of two firefighters in collisions nvolving Pacific Electric Railway cars. Truck 5, then stationed at 4th and Towne Streets, was responding to a 7:45 a.m., alarm, February 12, 1922, for a fire at 940 Stanford Street. While southbound on Stanford, the 85-foot-aerial entered the Ninth Street intersection, when a westbound Pacific Electric car slammed into the apparatus just forward of Tillerman Harry J. Custer's seat. His seatbelt snapped and Custer was hurled headfirst to the street. He died of skull injuries.

Nine months later, Engine 9 answered a November 19 alarm to a small hotel fire at 808 West Tenth Street. Firefighter Harry J. Powell was standing on the engine's tailboard while helping to lay hose. A passing Pacific Electric car fatally crushed him between the tailboard and the trolley.

Another Truck 5 tillerman was fatally injured, April 6, 1924, when the company was called to a second alarm at 1320 South Main Street. Ordered to the roof of the three-story commercial building to start ventilation, Firefighter Ercil G. Morse did not see a flush-mounted glass skylight shrouded by smoke. Plunging through the skylight, Morse fell three floors. He died the following day of skull injuries. Scott spoke for generations of firefighters before and after Morse's death in the line of duty when the chief engineer wrote a letter to the young man's mother:

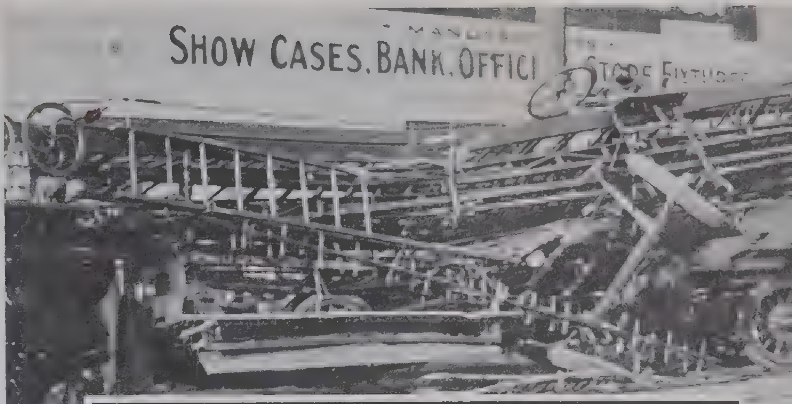
> *There are times when words fail to convey the depths of brotherly feeling, when in this dangerous service of ours, some man is called upon to pay the extreme penalty which this work exacts. There is not a man in the department whose heart does not go out in sympathy to those who are left behind, for not one of us knows that the next alarm of fire may be the last call for him.*

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Firefighter Ercil G. Morse
Truck 5
Died from injuries when he fell
through a skylight at a fire
April 7, 1924

Scott, meanwhile, turned his attention to what constituted the city's greatest potential for disaster: the timebomb of 108.6 square miles of brush, some of it standing taller than 25 feet, and extending from Griffith Park to Topanga Canyon in the city. Many more square miles of brush along the Santa Monica Mountains sprawled beyond the city limits. Given the capricious nature of brush fires, a blaze starting outside the city could, in a flash, sweep into LAFD-protected brushlands.

This chaparral and other species of ground cover was naturally impregnated with highly volatile oils and resins. No brush in the world was more flammable or burned faster, especially when preheated by low relative humidity and seasonal Santa Ana winds which regularly goaded incipient fires into expansive blazes snaking up and down canyon slopes. Los Angeles' brush wilderness, fortunately, contained few structures in 1924, but Scott knew it was only a matter of time before people began to build homes in the brushlands to take advantage of the panoramic vistas and rustic nature of the hills, mountains and canyons.



REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Firefighter Harry J. Custer
Truck 5
Died from injuries suffered in a collision
with a trolley car
February 12, 1922

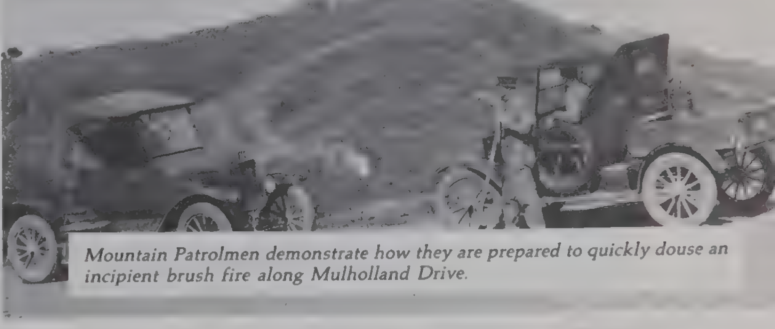
PHOTOGRAPH FROM THE COLLECTION OF WALT PITTMAN

In December, 1924, the department acquired two Water Department buildings and converted them into two Mountain Patrol Stations along Mulholland Drive which laced the top of the Santa Monica Mountains. Patrol 1 was located at Franklin Avenue (Coldwater Canyon) and Patrol 2 was based further west at Sepulveda Canyon (16500 Mulholland Drive). Additionally, the department built three lookout stations on high peaks and manned them with fire-spotters. Lookouts were on Coldwater Canyon at Patrol 1, San Vicente Peak and Temescal Peak. Boxes containing firefighting tools were strategically placed at 24 locations along Mulholland.

The Mountain Patrol was staffed, at the outset, by a battalion chief in command of firefighters as well as civilian employees. The firefighters rode automobiles as well as horses while on patrol. The barn for horses and equipment extended for several hundred yards behind Mountain Patrol 2 and provided an ideal stable for Scott's horse, Bullets, and another of his favorite riding horses. Scott sometimes rode with the horse patrolmen while they made their rounds.

The civilian employees cut and maintained fire trails, roads

FROM THE COLLECTION OF NEAL A. MISCHKE



Mountain Patrolmen demonstrate how they are prepared to quickly douse an incipient brush fire along Mulholland Drive.

Mountain Patrol 1's station at Franklin Avenue (Coldwater Canyon) and Mulholland Drive served as headquarters for what was to become one of the LAFD's most prideful group of brush firefighting specialists.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE LOS ANGELES FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION

and breaks. Within the first decade of the Mountain Patrol's operations, its resources grew to 28 pieces of apparatus, mostly small Ford trucks with booster tanks and hose, four horses and two mules. Two Cletrac tractors and trailers were used in the construction of fire roads and to haul 100-gallon tanks of water. Mountain Patrolmen also made frequent use of two trucks and trailers for transporting firebreak and fire road-cutting tractors.

The Mountain Patrol had two major sources of water: a 1.25 million gallon tank at Patrol 1, which served as the headquarters station, and a 23,500-gallon tank at Patrol 2. First-alarm fire suppression backup came from Engines 71, located at one time in a shed on Bel-Air Hotel property, 69, 39 and 27. By 1932, the Mountain Patrolmen, who were distinctively outfitted in green uniforms and Stetson hats and the civilian employees who worked with them, maintained 115 miles of firebreaks, 75 miles of trails and 29 miles of roadway. Mountain Patrolmen became a fiercely loyal adjunct to the LAFD and friendships formed continued long after the Mountain Patrol was disbanded in the fall of 1968. Four fully staffed fire stations are now located along Mulholland Drive.

Scott's stockpile of innovations seemed inexhaustible. If any date can be given to signify the start of professionalism in the fire service it would have to be January 5, 1925, when the department opened its Fire College. This first advanced firefighter training academy in the United States, if not the world, was located on the fourth floor of the newly-built headquarters Fire Station 3. Under the direction of First Assistant Chief Samuel H. Dodd, the curriculum included lectures by Dodd and his assistant, Lieutenant William W. Tebbets. They used audio-visual aids and working models of sprinkler systems, refrigeration plants, sectional cut-aways of hydrants and extinguishers, alarm systems and models of buildings. The study course included 17 lessons and 17 examinations. On March 10, 1925, the first class of 182 officers was graduated and Mayor George E. Cryer presented each with a diploma.

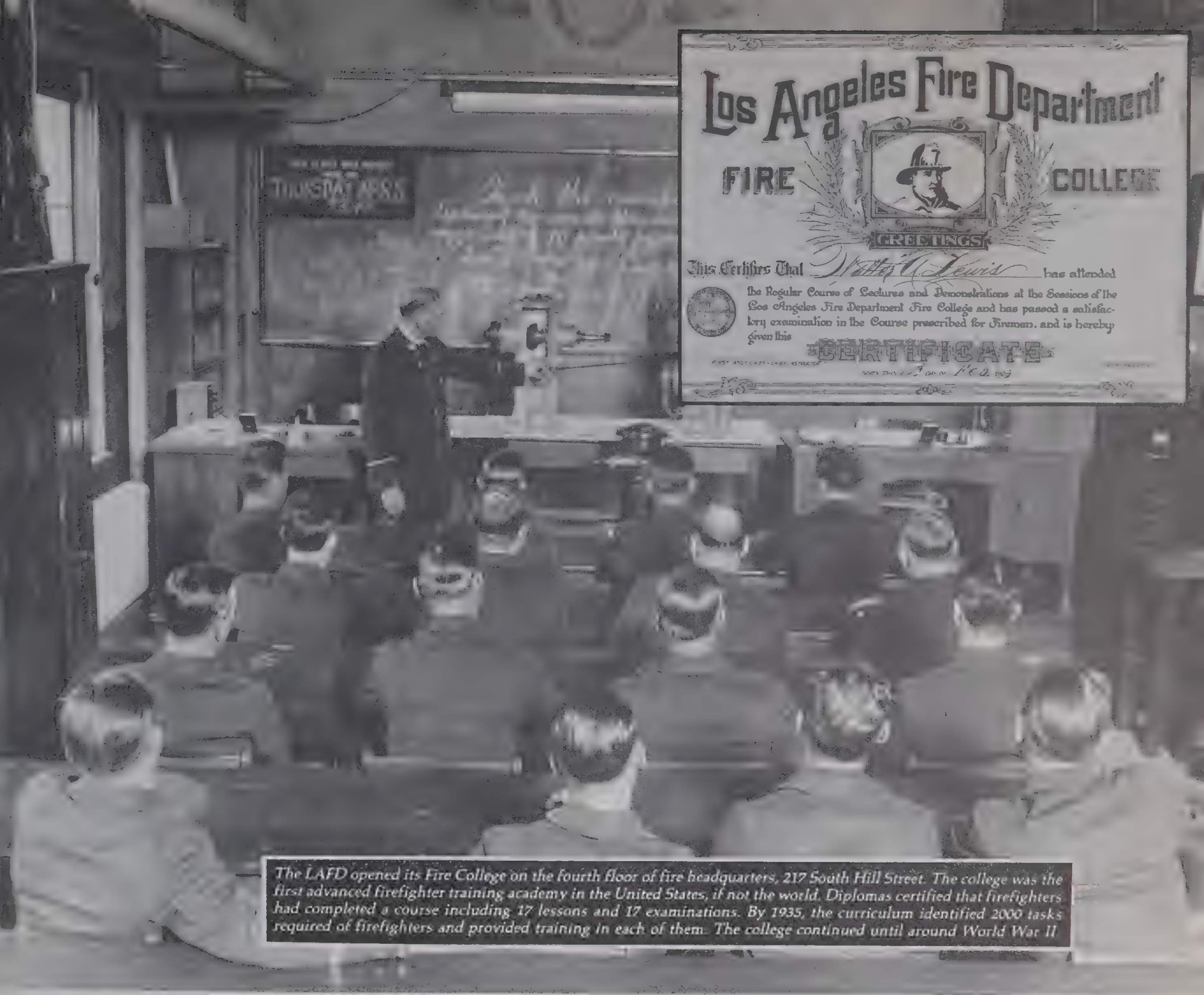
The Fire College faculty eventually included all LAFD officers above the rank of captain. The advanced course of study was opened to all firefighters on January 3, 1927. Students attended biweekly classes on their own time. Instructors were required to have at least seven years of firefighting experience as well as teaching credentials from the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA). The success of the Fire College quickly produced noticeable results in the field. The LAFD could point to more successful rescues and a drop in fire losses through more efficient firefighting. By 1935, the curriculum had identified 2000 tasks required of firefighters and training was given in each.

Other training aids included photographs, stereopticon slides and motion picture films produced by the department's Bureau of Photography which Scott created in 1926: probably another fire service first. The Fire College was not confined to classroom lectures. Principles and theories of firefighting were taught at headquarters. Students then proceeded to the drill tower to practice what they learned in the classroom. The third part of the curriculum took place in fire stations with company drills and reviews.

As an adjunct to the Fire College, Scott won fire commission approval in 1930 to build a new $30,000 drill tower on the site of the antiquated 1911 tower. The design of the tower is credited to the interest of the late Boris Laiming, an internationa

LAFD PHOTO

Two Cletrac tractors and trailers werre used by mountain Patrolmen to construct fire roads and to haul 100-gallon tanks of water.



Los Angeles Fire Department

FIRE COLLEGE

GREETINGS

This Certifies That Walter A. Lewis has attended the Regular Course of Lectures and Demonstrations at the Sessions of the Los Angeles Fire Department Fire College and has passed a satisfactory examination in the Course prescribed for Firemen, and is hereby given this

CERTIFICATE

The LAFD opened its Fire College on the fourth floor of fire headquarters, 217 South Hill Street. The college was the first advanced firefighter training academy in the United States, if not the world. Diplomas certified that firefighters had completed a course including 17 lessons and 17 examinations. By 1935, the curriculum identified 2000 tasks required of firefighters and provided training in each of them. The college continued until around World War II

fire protection authority and fire buff. Laiming found detailed drawings of a new concrete drill tower built for the Duisberg Germany, Fire Brigade, while he was reading a foreign fire service magazine. The Duisberg tower featured a smoke room, a sprinkler installation in the basement and other state-of-the-art refinements. Laiming showed the drawings to Scott who ordered that the drill tower, built at Avenue 19 and Pasadena Avenue, closely replicate Duisberg's.

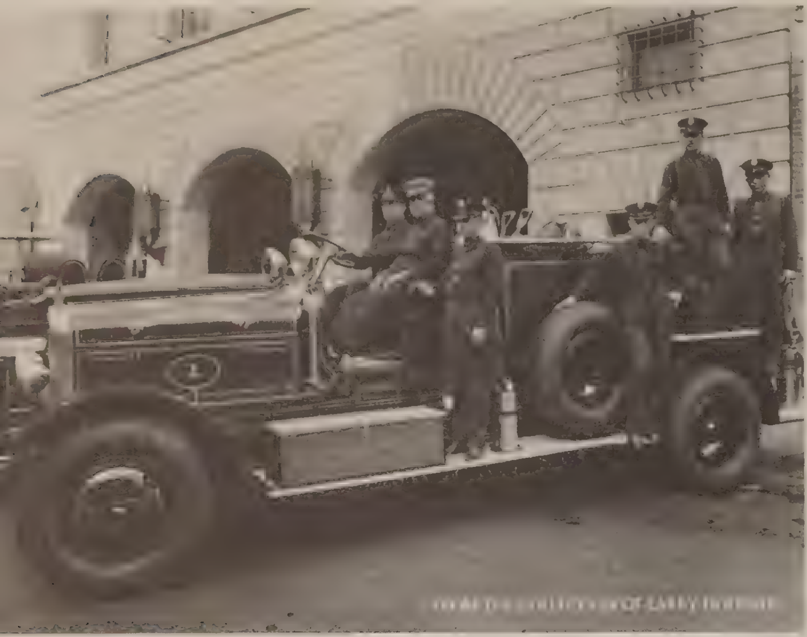
The cornerstone of Scott's Fire College concept was taken from one of his favorite books, ***A Practical Treatise on Outbreaks of Fire,*** by Sydney Compertz Gamble, published in 1926. Scott often referred to a passage which he considered the essence of what his Fire College exemplified:

> *The prevention and extinction of outbreaks of fire has become a highly-technical and complicated business and the fireman of today requires not only an intensive physical training, but also a great deal of scientific instruction. He has to face dangers and difficulties which were not even dreamed of 50 years ago on account of the great changes which have taken place in architecture and the presence, even in ordinary dwelling houses, of explosive and inordinately inflammable substances, of electrical currents and of obstacles that can only be removed by a skilled engineer.*

Scott's professionalism and the results it achieved on the fireground led departments the world over to ask for LAFD's study lessons. Many of them sent firefighters to attend the Fire College to learn what Scott referred to as, "The trade of fire engineering". In 1931, the Federal Board for Vocational Education surveyed the work of the Fire College and produced a textbook, ***Fire Fighting,*** which became a standard reference work throughout the fire service. The International Association of Fire Chiefs and the National Board of Fire Underwriters paid the expenses of Fire College instructors they sent to departments throughout the United States to help other cities set up similar programs.

If Scott never came up with another idea, he could have rested upon the laurels that the Fire College brought him. But Scott had more ideas in mind. Scott used bond issue funds to purchase three salvage companies which were placed in service at Fire Stations 3, 24 and 28 by June 30, 1925. They were immediately successful. During their first year, they answered 1116 alarms and spread 907 protective tarpaulins over valuables while performing other duties to minimize water damage.

In his annual report for the year ending June 30, 1925, Scott reported "a very gratifying decrease in fire losses". Total losses during the year came to $2,041,310; a net reduction of $1,309,035 over the preceding reporting period. Scott said "a substantial portion of the reduced annual loss is attributable to the protection of perishable goods which has been afforded by



The LAFD's salvage service, a first in the modern-day fire service, became operational by June 30, 1925, when the first three companies were in service. Salvage Company No. 1, a 1931 Seagrave, operated out of Fire Station 3.

the use of covers." Scott planned for citywide salvage company coverage which was accomplished as funding became available. Until that could occur, Scott ordered salvage tarpaulins carried on all truck companies. The LAFD's salvage service was a first in the modern-day fire service and, as much as any other factor, brought acclaim to the LAFD for holding down losses caused by fire.

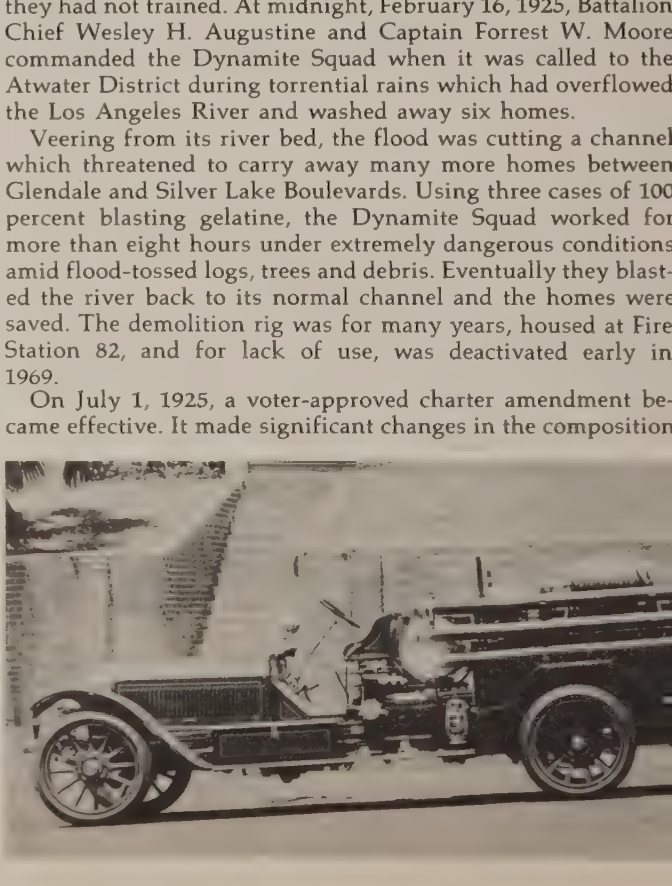
During 1927, the LAFD began another innovation starting with rescue service. First used was a 1922 White rescue squad wagon housed at Fire Station 23. That squad and later rescue units were primarily intended for providing breathing apparatus and attending firefighters overcome or otherwise injured at fires. The service proved invaluable and by 1930 the department began transporting injured firefighters to hospitals in LAFD ambulances. That service was later expanded to include hospital transportation through a citywide rescue-ambulance service for non-firefighters. For the year ending June 30, 1931, four LAFD rescue squads attended 504 men, women and children. Heart attacks and childbirths headed the list of calls. The 504 calls starkly contrast with the more than 175,000 responses a year that the LAFD's fleet of 49 paramedic rescue-ambulances were answering by the time the LAFD was 100 years old.

In addition to salvage and rescue squad companies, Scott developed specialized apparatus — often one of a kind — for those unusual incidents which the fire service can expect. These companies included four foamite tank wagons for petrochemical fires. They were stationed at Engines 17, 36, 49 and 57. Also put in service was the searchlight wagon for nighttime operations, a CO-2 Wagon, stationed at 17's, and carrying many tanks of carbon dioxide fire extinguishers for flammable liquid fires, a cellar pump for basement water removal and the famous Dynamite Squad, also known as the Demolition Corps, which at one time consisted of 64 firefighters. They were evenly divided on both platoons and specially trained in handling explosives stored in strategically located bunkers around the city.

The Demolition Corps trained for jobs including dynamiting of fire-damaged walls and smokestacks, preparing firebreaks, clearing highways of obstructions, combating oil storage and gas well fires, plus a myriad of other tasks. Ironically, the corps more often than not was called to incidents for which they had not trained. At midnight, February 16, 1925, Battalion Chief Wesley H. Augustine and Captain Forrest W. Moore commanded the Dynamite Squad when it was called to the Atwater District during torrential rains which had overflowed the Los Angeles River and washed away six homes.

Veering from its river bed, the flood was cutting a channel which threatened to carry away many more homes between Glendale and Silver Lake Boulevards. Using three cases of 100 percent blasting gelatine, the Dynamite Squad worked for more than eight hours under extremely dangerous conditions amid flood-tossed logs, trees and debris. Eventually they blasted the river back to its normal channel and the homes were saved. The demolition rig was for many years, housed at Fire Station 82, and for lack of use, was deactivated early in 1969.

On July 1, 1925, a voter-approved charter amendment became effective. It made significant changes in the composition

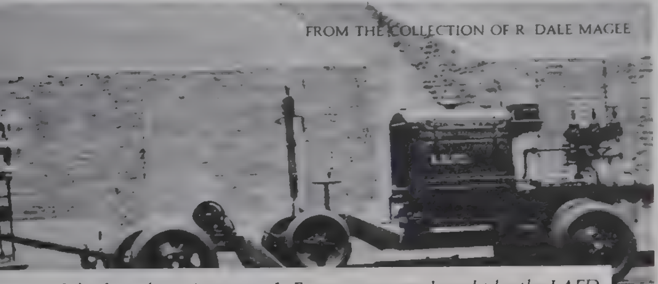


Salvage work by the LAFD included the use of tarpaulins to cover valuables and water removal. During the first year of the department's salvage operations, fire losses dropped about 50 per cent.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF PAUL D

of the fire commission and the process by which chief engineers were selected. No longer was the mayor a member of the fire commission. Along with 15 other city departments, the LAFD would have a five-member commission "to supervise, control, regulate and manage the department and to make and enforce all necessary and desirable rules and regulations". The commissioners were mayoral appointees with City Council approval. This change diminished, but did not end, the mayor's direct control of the chief engineer.

From that day forward, moreover, the chief engineer had to be selected from among the top three candidates, based upon civil service examination procedures. This new law became known as "The Rule of Three", which simply meant that the fire commissioners chose chief engineers from among the list of three names submitted to them by civil service. It is curious to note that Scott, although chief engineer for six years by that time, was, by an amendment to the ordinance, placed under civil service protection retroactive to June 2, 1921.



FROM THE COLLECTION OF R. DALE MAGEE

One of the first three American LaFrance pumpers bought by the LAFD in 1914 delivered 700-gallons-per-minute. It was later used to pull a Byron Jackson basement pump. The company was housed at Fire Station 16, then located at 139 North Hope Street.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF PAUL DITZEL

Firefighters wearing Gibbs breathing apparatus practice entering a smoke-filled building. For added protection they grasped a rope which would indicate a path of quick retreat if necessary.

The largest slice of the 1922 bond issue for LAFD improvements went into the $1 million new fire alarm office, a sturdy fire-resistant and earthquake-proof building at 2228 West Sixth Street in Westlake (MacArthur) Park. What was to become known as the Westlake Signal Office went in service September 1, 1925. The building housed the batteries, telegraph equipment, circuitry and alarm registers previously located in the old City Hall on Broadway. Members of the city's Bureau of Building and Safety operated the fire alarm box system. An incoming alarm from the city's 800 boxes at that time was retransmitted from Westlake to all fire stations. By the time Westlake opened, Headquarters Fire Station 3's telephone alarm switchboard had been moved into a separate small dispatching room adjacent to the cavernous room housing the fire alarm box system.

Until December 24, 1932, all box alarms were transmitted to every fire station. After that date, the LAFD converted to a uniquely new firebox transmission system unlike any other in the United States. Under this new holdout system, alarms were intercepted at Westlake and the number of the box verified by dispatchers. A card with perforations corresponding to the box number was inserted into a device resembling a cash register. The dispatcher adjusted levers on the register's faceplate to display the box. When the register's handle was pulled, the transmitted box number was struck on the big bells in only those stations which were to answer the alarm. Smaller bells on the secondary circuit — called the Joker — in stations simultaneously pinged out a department-wide notification that a box alarm was being transmitted.

The design and installation of the system was credited to Robert H. Gray and Walter A. Bray of the Fire and Police signal division of Los Angeles. The $21,200 cost of the system was, as far as firefighters were concerned, one of the best expenditures the city could make and an ideal Christmas gift, too. No longer would firefighters be required to stand 24-hour watches and to log all alarms. No longer would firefighters, whenever the big bell began striking a box number, turn out of their beds at night, slide the poles and prepare to answer a box

EXPLOSIVES
DANGEROUS
FIRE

The elite Dynamite Squad, also known as the Demolition Corps, trained for many jobs calling for the use of explosives. More often they were called to unusual incidents for which they had not been trained.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF BILL DAHLQUIST

that might not call them until the fourth alarm or not at all. Under the holdout system, the firefighters knew, as soon as the big bell began striking, that it was a response for their station.

Two years after the holdout system went into operation, fire alarm communications were additionally improved by the installation of radio receivers. Starting on August 26, 1934, 20 automobiles assigned to assistant chiefs and battalion chiefs were equipped with receivers tuned to the Los Angeles Police Department's radio frequency. The fireboats were similarly equipped shortly thereafter. When a chief was at a fire or away from his station, a radio message directed him to telephone the Westlake Signal Office.

Alarm locations were not at first broadcast. The chief or his driver would usually go to the nearest alarm box and call Westlake with a telephone handset carried in chief's automobiles and, later, apparatus. The handset plugged into the box and enabled chiefs or their drivers to call Westlake to learn the location of an alarm. Los Angeles was one of the first fire departments to utilize radio. (Boston was the first, starting in October, 1923.)

The American fire service at that time distrusted radio, largely because chiefs considered fire alarm boxes equipped with telephone jacks and telegraph keys more dependable. For years, the LAFD and other departments urged the public to know the location of their nearest home or at-work fire alarm box and to turn in alarms from them. The explanation most often given was that a telephoned report of fire could, and often did, result in a garbled address, especially in a city with so many similarly-sounding street names and people who could not speak English. By pulling a firebox and remaining at the box until apparatus arrived, firefighters could be directed to the fire. As public safety messages of the time emphasized, there was little chance of error during those first few critical minutes after a fire starts. Eventually, the LAFD became the first major American fire department to equip all apparatus with two-way radios.

Prior to the 1934 start of the LAFD radio service, firefighters used telephone handsets to plug into fire alarm boxes and talk directly to the Westlake Signal Office. This method was most often used to call for second, third or fourth alarms.

Los Angeles, meanwhile, continued to grow. City of Venice voters approved annexation to Los Angeles, effective November 25, 1925. The LAFD acquired Venice's 29 firefighters and took over two stations at 213 Rose Avenue, a two-story frame building and a two-story brick firehouse at 1703 Speedway. The Rose Avenue house became LAFD Engine 62 housing a two-piece 1915 American LaFrance combination pumper and a hose wagon and a 1913 American LaFrance city service rig which became LAFD Truck 17. The Speedway location was renamed Engine 63 and housed a 1922 American LaFrance combination pump and hose wagon. Box alarms continued to go directly from their Venice locations to Stations 62 and 63 until the system was later connected to Westlake.

Harbor area box alarms were received in the San Pedro City Hall, where Engine 36 was located. That alarm center known as the San Pedro Signal Office was later relocated across the street from Fire Station 53 at 438 Mesa Street. There was only one LAFD firebox in the San Fernando Valley. It was located at Fire Station 39. Cost was the overriding factor as telephones became commonplace. Alarms were received in a second floor dispatching room at Fire Station 39 which became known as the Van Nuys Signal Office.

Watts was annexed May 29, 1926, a year after Venice became part of Los Angeles. The LAFD thus acquired Watts' four firefighters and the community's tiny station at 1645 East

The Westlake Signal Office, which went in service in 1925, replaced the old City Hall fire alarm office. Alarms from the 800 fireboxes were received on these registers and related circuitry and retransmitted to metropolitan area fire stations.

Fire alarm box transmitting console at Westlake Signal Office.

103rd Street at Graham Avenue, where a 1924 Seagrave Suburban combination pumper and hose wagon was housed. The apparatus was designated Engine 65. Two years later, Engine 65 was moved to a combination fire and police substation at 1525 East 103rd Street. Watts' alarm system was soon joined to Westlake's.

Despite Scott's efforts, harbor fireboat protection continued to lag until passage of a May 6, 1924, bond issue authorizing construction of one of the world's most powerful fireboats to protect the waterfront where assessed valuation was conservatively estimated at $100 million. Fireboat 2, a 99-foot, steel-hulled craft, was built under a $214,000 contract at the Los Angeles Shipbuilding and Drydock Company (Todd Shipyard) and launched October 20, 1925, as construction was being completed on a station to house the boat and its crew at Berth 226-227, Terminal Island.

Fireboat 2 was, at that time, capable of delivering 13,500 gallons-of-water-per-minute. Its armament included five large guns, including a Big Bertha mounted on the wheelhouse. Big Bertha could deliver a 10,200-gallon-per-minute fire knockout punch via a six-inch-diameter nozzle. One of the guns was mounted on a stationary tower, believed to be the first, or at least one of the first, fireboat towers in the nation. The tower could extend the gun to a height of 44-feet above the waterline.

Boat 2's firepower was mainly provided by six Byron Jackson four-stage, gasoline-powered centrifugal pumps. Three 350-horsepower Winton gasoline engines drove the three-propeller boat to a top speed of 15 knots. When needed, two of these Wintons could be disengaged and used to supply water to the guns or to 24 hose outlets, evenly divided on the port and starboard sides. Boat 2 also carried 18 cylinders, each containing 50 pounds of carbon dioxide extinguishing agent for attacking flammable liquid fires. Four reels carried 4000 feet of various sizes of hose.

Fireboat 2, with 14 officers and crewmen, was commissioned December 2, 1925. Following many modifications, the boat was capable of delivering 18,655 gallons-per-minute at 150 pounds pump pressure by the time the LAFD celebrated its 100th birthday. Three years later, Fireboat 3, was launched on March 15, 1928. The wood-hulled cruiser was 38-feet-long and of shallow draft: two feet, six inches. Powered by Sterling Marine gasoline engines rated at up to 250-horsepower, Boat 3's Byron Jackson centrifugal pump delivered 290-gallons-per-minute at 125 pounds pump pressure through three outlets and a foam generator. The boat, moored alongside Boat 2's quarters, was built by the Fellows and Stewart Shipyard, Wilmington. The boat was primarily intended as an auxiliary to Fireboat 2 and for carrying chief officers to direct fireground operations from the water side of the involved pier or structure.

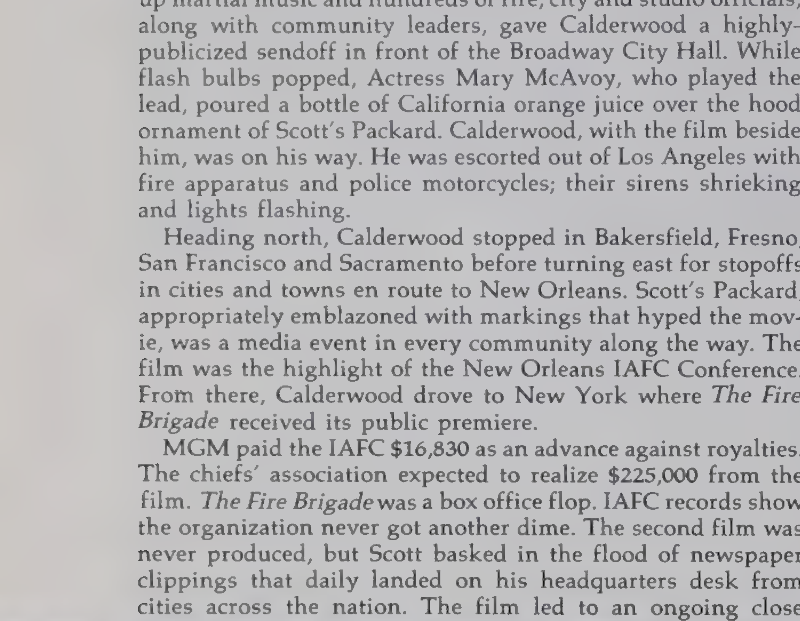
Scott, the dynamic fire chief, fire protection and fire prevention innovator, was a master showman, too, especially if he could make masses of people more fire prevention conscious. The best way to do it at the time was through the medium of motion pictures. Scott got support from Producer Louis B. Mayer of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios to film two silent black-and-white movies, *The Fire Brigade* and *The Passing of the Horses.* In addition to their mass appeal fire prevention themes, the proceeds of the films would benefit the fire prevention campaigns of the International Association of Fire Chiefs.

Scott and Mayer, wise to the ways of Hollywood hoopla, decided to privately premiere *The Fire Brigade* during the October 19-to-23, 1926, conference of the IAFC in New Orleans. The film would then publicly open at the famous Capitol Theatre in New York City and, simultaneously, in theaters across the nation. To build suspense and heighten public awareness, Scott decided that Captain Sam Calderwood would take the film in the chief engineer's Packard sedan and drive it to New Orleans, with stopoffs, attended by band-playing, parades and demonstrations of fire prevention methods by departments along the way.

On October 5, 1926, which not coincidentally marked the start of national Fire Prevention Week, the LAFD band struck up martial music and hundreds of fire, city and studio officials, along with community leaders, gave Calderwood a highly-publicized sendoff in front of the Broadway City Hall. While flash bulbs popped, Actress Mary McAvoy, who played the lead, poured a bottle of California orange juice over the hood ornament of Scott's Packard. Calderwood, with the film beside him, was on his way. He was escorted out of Los Angeles with fire apparatus and police motorcycles; their sirens shrieking and lights flashing.

Heading north, Calderwood stopped in Bakersfield, Fresno, San Francisco and Sacramento before turning east for stopoffs in cities and towns en route to New Orleans. Scott's Packard, appropriately emblazoned with markings that hyped the movie, was a media event in every community along the way. The film was the highlight of the New Orleans IAFC Conference. From there, Calderwood drove to New York where *The Fire Brigade* received its public premiere.

MGM paid the IAFC $16,830 as an advance against royalties. The chiefs' association expected to realize $225,000 from the film. *The Fire Brigade* was a box office flop. IAFC records show the organization never got another dime. The second film was never produced, but Scott basked in the flood of newspaper clippings that daily landed on his headquarters desk from cities across the nation. The film led to an ongoing close relationship between the LAFD and the film community which resulted in television programs and included *The Towering Inferno,* featuring Steve McQueen.



Fresno officials welcome LAFD Capt. Sam Calderwood during his transcontinental tour in Chief Engineer Scott's Packard sedan to publicize the MGM silent film The Fire Brigade. Calderwood delivered the film to a New York City theater for its public premiere. [illegible] the fire prevention [illegible] of the International Association of Fire Chiefs.

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From Hollywood's earliest days, the film industry and its actors and actors were closely associated with the LAFD and frequently used LAFD apparatus and stations for off-studio filming. Cowboy Actor Tom Mix got off his saddle and into the driver's seat of a LAFD engine in this film.

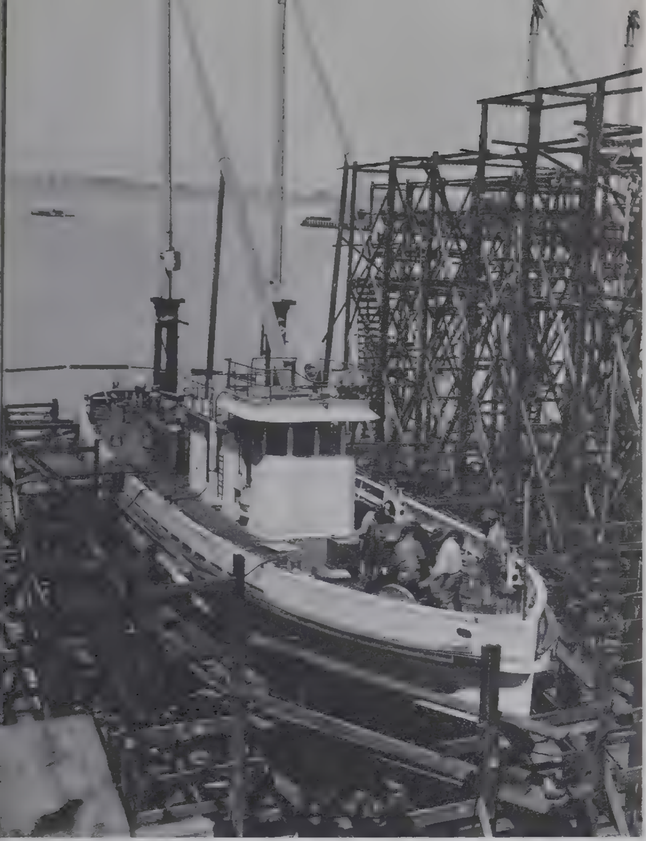
Battalion Chief Peter R. Lucarelli, who later was promoted to assistant Chief and served as chairperson of the LAFD centennial celebration, was a technical advisor before and during filming ot *The Towering Inferno.* Most Hollywood film and television productions utilize active and retired members of the LAFD as technical advisors. LAFD members and apparatus are, moreover, frequently shown in television and motion picture films and commercials.

Congratulations for what was undoubtedly the most highly publicized national fire prevention campaign since Mrs. Catherine O'Leary's cow started the Great Chicago Fire which spawned annual Fire Prevention Week, continued to pour into fire headquarters when tragedy struck. It was one of those routine fires that firefighters quickly forget minutes after returning to quarters. Firefighter Ross Sechrist of Engine 31 would not return from this alarm. Around the station, Sechrist was called "Highpockets", because he stood six-feet, two-inches. With his metal helmet and gold eagle at the crest, he looked even taller as he pulled on his turnouts and helmet when Engine 31 got an alarm, December 23, 1926, during a wind and rainstorm.

Storm-whipped power lines had fallen onto the wood and wire mesh chicken coop standing in puddles of water at the rear of the house at 1337 West 58th Place. The resulting fire required only a pump can of water. Three of Engine 31's firefighters entered the chicken coop. Sechrist followed. Taller than the others, his helmet eagle touched the chicken wire roof which, unknown to anyone, was conducting a lethal charge of electricity. Sechrist might have survived, except that a small section of insulation along the helmet's headband had worn away from use. The jolt instantly wormed through the helmet and found the spot where Sechrist's perspiring forehead touched the metal helmet. At 3 o'clock that afternoon, two days

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Firefighter Ross Sechrist
Engine 31
Died of electrocution at fire
December 23, 1926



ireboat 2, costing $214,000, was built at the Los Angeles Shipbuilding and Drydock Company (Todd Shipyard) and launched October 20, 1925.

before Christmas, Sechrist was pronounced dead of electrocution.

Unlike other cities, notably Chicago and New York, the 14 years of prohibition of the manufacture, sale or transportation of intoxicating liquors, as defined by the 18th Amendment to the United States Constitution, did not overly impact the city. The law was widely flouted until its repeal in 1933. Firefighters answered many alarms to homes and other occupancies where bootleg stills exploded and set alcohol-fed fires.

Two of the more notable prohibition era fires occurred on February 27, 1928. Engine 43 answered an alarm to a large two-story brick home at 2856 Forrester Drive in the Cheviot Hills section of West Los Angeles. The house, rented by an attorney, was the site of a previous raid by prohibition agents. Engine 43 firefighters found the structure well-involved upon their arrival. They also found a new and elaborate 500-gallon alcohol still which was electrically equipped with an exhaust system running through water pipe lines to eliminate telltale odors.

The strong potential for an explosion which could destroy adjacent houses caused Engine 43 firefighters to consider calling the Dynamite Squad to blow up the house rather than risk further peril to lives and property. They discarded the idea. If the house was going to explode, it would go up long before the Dynamite Squad could get there. At great personal risk, the firefighters of Engine 43 attacked the fire which destroyed the house. Three hours later that morning, Engine 43 was called out again to an explosion and fire in a bungalow three blocks from the Forrester address. The explosion of a still containing 300 gallons of reclaimed, denatured alcohol blew the roof off the house. What remained of the structure was destroyed by fire.

Probably the most memorable fire associated with prohibi-

The first major fire fought by Fireboat 2 firefighters occurred on March 3, 1926, when the lumber schooner Sierra *burned at the E.K. Wood Lumber Company wharf.*

FROM THE COLLECTION OF PAUL DITZEL

tion occurred at 10:30 a.m., August 4, 1930, when Box 63 at North San Pedro Street and Commercial Street was pulled. The box was immediately outside the block-square Los Angeles Warehouse. The two top floors were heavily-charged with smoke.In addition to fireworks, hundreds of sacks of sugar and other flammables, the warehouse was used by federal agents to store ammunition and liquor valued at $500,000, which had been confiscated from bootleggers around Los Angeles. Scott answered the four-alarmer and took command of 18 companies while special-calling additional smoke masks. Nine unconscious firefighters were pulled from the building. All recovered, but with severe hangovers from the alcohol fumes.

Coincidental with prohibition was the beginning of major fires in motion picture studios in and around Los Angeles as the Hollywood area became the film capital of the world. From the industry's earliest days, its fire problems were essentially twofold: Large, cavernous sound stages where flimsy and flammable materials were used to construct indoor sets amid a labyrinth of sometimes haphazard electrical cabling. Roofs and walls, thickly-built to prevent extraneous sounds from interfering with shooting films when silent movies gave way to talkies, further exacerbated smoke ventilating and firefighting problems.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF PAUL DITZEL

Century Studio, Sunset Boulevard and El Centro Avenue, was among the earliest film studios to burn. When it burned in 1926, it produced slapstick comedies, as did LKO (Lehrman-Knockout) in the same complex which today is the Gower Gulch Shopping Center. Fire is believed to have originated when an electrical short ignited highly flammable nitrate film in the editing room.

Studio backlots constituted the other major problem. The true-to-life impression while facing these outdoor sets depicting locales in ancient Egypt, New York City street scenes, or western frontier villages with saloons and all the other make-believe for which Hollywood became so ingeniously famous, masked the heavy fireload that was behind them. The false-front sets were supported by what can best be described as lumber yards on stilts. Inter-laced timbers supporting these false-front sets quickly became tinder dry under the Southern California sun and Santa Ana winds, while begging for a spark to set them off.

Two of Hollywood's earliest studio fires occurred within four months of each other and were only a few blocks apart on Sunset Boulevard. Incinerator sparks touched off sets in the Warner Brothers Studio backlot at Sunset Boulevard and Bronson Street on the night of January 25, 1928. A fire whistle atop a sound stage automatically alerted studio workers and transmitted an alarm to Westlake. The flimsy sets and their lumber supports were seething with flames when the first seven fire companies arrived. Several firefighters were injured while containing flames to the backlot perimeter. Other firefighters concentrated their efforts upon saving $1 million in finished film in Warner Brothers' processing laboratory. The laboratory was saved, but the backlot crumbled into ashes with losses put at $200,000.

Thrill shows, often at the Los Angeles Coliseum during football game half-times, brought fire safety awareness to the public's attention. Firefighter dives into safety net during this December, 1927, Los Angeles Fire and Police Department joint exhibition.

Fox Studios at Sunset Boulevard and Western Avenue, four blocks east of Warner's, was the site of a similarly spectacular blaze starting at 2 a.m., May 21, 1928. A four-alarm armada of apparatus and firefighters fought six hours to knockdown the stubborn fire in Fox's newest and largest sound stage. The $200,000 barn-like structure was destroyed as were two sets inside for films being shot: *Me — Gangster* and *Plastered in Paris,* which suggests the focus of Hollywood scriptwriters in those legendary gangster and prohibition days.

Virtually overlooked, while spectacular Hollywood fires aroused much curiosity, was a downtown hotel fire which created little interest at the time. Nearly half a century later, that hotel would be the site of one of the city's worst disasters during the LAFD's first 100 years. Church bells and whistles were ringing in the New Year, January 1, 1928, when, shortly after midnight, a Westlake Signal Office dispatcher took a call from the Ponet Square Hotel, 1249 South Grand Avenue.

Residents fled in their nightclothing and new year revelers crowded the streets to watch firefighters raising their aerial ladders and operating streams from them, while other firefighters snaked their hoses inside to battle their way up smoke-filled open stairways to the fire which burned out the fourth floor. Loss was $25,000, but nobody was seriously injured. On September 13, 1970, another early morning fire again resulted in aerial ladder and interior attack in virtually the same fire scenario, but with tragic results: 19 fatalities and 25 injuries among the hotel's residents.

With Scott's May, 1927, creation of a public relations bureau, n unheard of activity in the fire service up to that time, he was ble to create more fire safety programs to reach mass audinces. Among these efforts were department-sponsored baseall, basketball and other sports. Competition included the olice department, other fire departments, colleges and univerities.

Marathons of every sort became almost ritualistic during hose years of the Roaring Twenties. The best-remembered of hem was the 1928 Bunion Derby, a transcontinental footrace tarting at Ascot Park, near Los Angeles, and ending at Madion Square Garden, New York. Harold D. "Red" Grange, a amous football star, was one of the promoters of the race which was intended to promote the use of transcontinental Highway 66. Prizes ranged from $25,000 to $1000. Two LAFD thletes, Hoke Norville of Truck 5 and Thomas "Tex" Zumwalt of Engine 57 were chosen as the department's entries by a Los Angeles Firemen's Relief Association committee.

Norville and Zumwalt were among 199 marathoners who started the race at 4:30 p.m., Sunday, March 4. Zumwalt was nearly run down by a motorist near the Nevada border. He pulled an ankle ligament while getting out of the driver's way and had to drop out of the race. Norville continued. LAFD members eagerly followed daily progress reports, including one published observation that the marathon was comparable "to a group of firemen fighting their way through the chow line at suppertime in some engine house".

Runners averaged 43.4 miles a day during the 98-day race which passed through Chicago. Norville finished in 25th place out of the 55 marathoners who completed the run. His prize? The glory of running in the Bunion Derby. Later, Norville was a member of the LAFD football team that played New York City firefighters. Retired Firefighter Chester L. Errett of Truck 10, also a member of that team, recalls that LAFD won the game. The score: 56-to-0. Norville retired December 20, 1950, as a battalion chief.

Among Scott's efforts to keep the LAFD and fire safety before the public was the annual football game, usually played in the Coliseum. Halftime entertainment was highlighted by the LAFD thrill show during which two aerial ladders were fully-extended to form an arch. Climbing to the uppermost rungs, firefighters dove into safety nets. The most famous high jumper was Firefighter Harry Louis Tree, 40, of Truck 4, who held several world records.

Los Angeles
New York
March 4th 1928.
T J Zumwalt.
Hoke S. Norvill

The 1928 Bunion Derby, a coast-to-coast marathon, started at Ascot Park, near Los Angeles, on March 4 and ended at New York's Madison Square Garden 98 days later. The LAFD had two entries, Firefighters Hoke Norville of Truck 5 (far right) and Thomas "Tex" Zumwalt of Engine 57 (third from right). Zumwalt was forced to quit due to an ankle injury. Norville finished in 25th place out of the 55 marathoners who completed the run.

The LAFD's most famous thrill show high-jumper was Firefighter Harry Louis Tree of Truck 4, who held several world records. Tree, who had no fear of diving off tall ladders and buildings was, ironically, instantly killed, March 21, 1929, in a fall of only several feet from Truck 4's running board while the apparatus was turning onto Beverly Boulevard from Western Avenue as the apparatus was responding to a fire.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF PAUL DITZEL

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Firefighter Harry Louis Tree
Truck 4
Died from injuries suffered in fall from apparatus
while answering a fire alarm
March 21, 1929

At 11:46 p.m., March 21, 1929, Truck 4 was responding to an alarm at 404 South Sierra Bonita Avenue from its quarters at 158 South Western Avenue. The truck was turning onto Beverly Boulevard from Western as Tree, standing on the running board, clung to a ladder. The ladder was improperly secured. As the big truck made the sweeping turn, the ladder came loose. Tree lost his grip, fell, and was run over by a rear wheel. The firefighter who had no fear of jumping from high ladders was, ironically, instantly killed in a fall of only several feet.

Underlying Scott's fire safety and public education programs was a hardline approach to those who considered fire precautions an unnecessary expense. Sponsors of the Los Angeles Auto Show, one of the biggest annual events in the city, applied to the department for approval to stage the show under four gigantic tents. The canvas tents and inside bunting and other decorations were not fire-resistant. Scott, with fire commission approval, refused to issue permits for the show.

The politically influential sponsors went directly to the City

Council which overrode the department and fire commission. The show opened at Washington Boulevard and Hill Streets under four gigantic tents covering 350 new cars, but not before Scott sent fire inspectors with hand extinguishers to patrol the show. A ring-down fire alarm was directly connected to the Westlake Signal Office.

About 2500 browsers were inside the tents at 4:15 p.m., that March 5, 1929, when an electrical short ignited bunting. Inspectors turned in the alarm, began evacuation and vainly tried to fight the incredibly fast-spreading flames which raced up the sides of the tents and across their tops. Fourth District (Battalion) Chief Frank Winkler arrived and sent in a second alarm as thousands of people fled in terror, including a woman who jumped on the running board of a passing automobile.

Within half an hour the remains of the tents shrouded 350 fire-blackened automobiles which were destroyed with losses of $1,250,000. What could easily have been a catastrophic loss of life without the foresight of pre-fire planning, turned into a spectacular blaze with burn injuries to Firefighters William F. Kelly and Joseph Caddo of Engine 29. The Los Angeles Motor Dealers Association thereafter moved the show to the rebuilt Shrine Auditorium which fire had destroyed in 1920.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF PAUL STEINBACHER

Woman jumps on running board of car to escape flames sweeping through four tents housing the Los Angeles Auto Show at Washington Boulevard and Hill Streets. Thousands of other show attendees fled in terror from the March 5, 1929, fire which destroyed 350 automobiles.

Scott's achievements were known worldwide in the fire service by the time the International Association of Fire Chiefs held its annual conference in Birmingham, Alabama, October 22-to-25, 1929. Scott was elected president of the IAFC, the first of two LAFD chief engineers who headed the association during the department's first century. (John H. Alderson who succeeded Scott, was elected IAFC president during the association's September 12-to-15, 1950, San Francisco conference.)

While Scott was in Alabama, the LAFD experienced a severe epidemic of fires during a 24-hour period starting shortly after midnight, October 24, 1929, when an explosion and fire caused an estimated $1,500,000 damage to the Consolidated Film Industries, Inc., laboratory, 5515 Melrose Avenue, where film was processed for RKO and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Albert Lund, a film processor, was asphyxiated by deadly fumes given off by the highly-explosive and flammable nitrocellulose film used in those early Hollywood days before safer film became the industry standard.

Goaded by Santa Ana winds that day, a fire starting at 1:30 p.m., in heavy brush in the Hollywood Hills' Cahuenga Pass cut a two-mile swath while destroying the open-air Pilgrimage Play Theatre and the similarly famous Hollywood Knolls (Hollywood) sign. The fire was stopped by a solid defense line of firefighters massed to protect the Hollywood Bowl which was threatened but not damaged. Every fire station in the city saw action during a three-hour period that afternoon when more than 22 fires, whipped by blustering winds, kept fire companies hurrying from one blaze to another.

S OUTLET CO. 524
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34

While against regulations today, firefighters of an earlier era frequently found it faster to get out of buildings by sliding hoselines, rather than to come down stairs or ladders.

With resources falling to dangerously low levels, firefighters were forced to work harder with second alarm assignments at fires which normally would call for more help. The four 2-2-2 alarms that afternoon leveled or damaged two houses at Monte Vista Street and North Avenue 54; the Boston Tire Company at 1424 East Fourth Street and three nearby houses; three bungalows at Sunset Boulevard and Effie Street and a $165,000 blaze which spread from six garages into the Normandie Flats apartment building at 821 South Normandie Avenue. Smaller fires damaged 16 other homes throughout the city.

On Friday, October 29, 1929, four days after Scott became IAFC president, the stock market crashed. Scott was faced with new problems as the worst economic depression in the nation's history began. Unlike other cities, no LAFD firefighters were laid off. Scott reported the department would maintain its 1718-member strength. Apparatus purchases and replacement programs would, however, come to a virtual halt. From 1927 until 1937, when the depression was virtually over, the LAFD bought not a single pumper, not a single truck and only three combination chemical and hose wagons.

The financial panic led to mass national unemployment. The situation in Los Angeles had become critical by autumn, 1930. Los Angeles firefighters, along with other city employees, voluntarily signed up for one percent paycheck deductions to create a fund to help provide work for the jobless.

hose deductions were later voluntarily increased to 10 per- nt as the problem worsened. Within four months, the Asso- ated City Employees Fund for the Unemployed grew to 100,000. Unemployed people registered at fire stations for ork. Firefighters investigated 30,000 job applications and as- gned them three top priorities: married men with minor ependents, married men with adult dependents and single en.

The fund was tapped for $84,830 to employ workers in Santa onica Mountain brushlands. Largely working under Moun- in Patrolmens' direction, the workers cut 15 miles of new fire reaks, 19 miles of new trails in heretofore inaccessible areas nd cleared and widened 25.26 miles of existing firebreaks. angerously thick brush in Laurel Canyon was burned off by orkers, who also built a six-mile-long firebreak near the ncino Reservoir.

Early in 1931, as Los Angeles' unemployment problems orsened and mass starvation became a distant possibility, cott arranged for the free rental of a large, empty warehouse at 2th and Olive Streets. The warehouse would serve as a distri- ution point for food, clothing and other life necessities. Using he department's proven mass education for fire safety tech- iques, the LAFD adapted them and put out public appeals for ood and clothing which were picked up and hauled to the arehouse.

Firefighters delivered donation baskets to grocery stores as very fire station in the city became a receiving point for food nd clothing. Firefighters drove to Kern County and brought ack potatoes and other vegetables for the hungry. All down- own fire stations, meanwhile, took on added duties as engine ompanies daily delivered boxes of apples to street corner endors, most of them women with minor children to support. housands of boxes of apples were delivered.

In his June, 1931, annual report, Scott made a special point of iting the humanitarian efforts of the department: "The mem- ers have, almost to a man, realized their fortunate position, vith steady employment of a vital and indispensable nature, hrough a period of unusual depression. Contact with the nemployed of the city has accentuated their understanding nd realization of the obligation which every employee owes to is municipality."

Through luck and Scott's foresight, the 1927 bond issue for epartmental improvements was passed prior to the depres- ion. Otherwise, one of the most famous and familiar fire tations in the world might not have been built when it was. art of the fallout from the bond issue was $99,627 for con- truction of new Fire Station 27 at 1355 North Cahuenga Boule- ard in the heart of Hollywood. The two-story brick building ontained 18,227-square-feet and was said to be the largest irehouse west of the Mississippi.

Fire Station 27, said to be the largest firehouse west of the Mississippi, earned further fame because it was frequently used by Hollywood filmmakers.

Part of a $2,500,000 bond issue in 1922 was used to reconstruct and enlarge Fire Station 3 at 217 South Hill Street, to accommodate the growing needs of the fire prevention bureau and the headquarters offices in the LAFD.

Fire Station 27 went in service July 1, 1930, with firefighters assigned to man Engine 27, Hose 2, Truck 9, Rescue 2 and Salvage 4. Their first run came at 3:14 p.m., to a two-story brick hotel at 6724 Hollywood Boulevard. Occupants of apartment 149 put out the fire with buckets of water before firefighters arrived. A district (battalion) chief and a division chief would later make the station their headquarters. Fire Station 27 was badly-needed in rapidly-growing Hollywood, with its film studios making the area the center of the world's production of films. A large commercial and residential district also grew up in the district.

Motion picture studios frequently make use of the station for filming television or movie scenes calling for fire sequences of apparatus answering alarms. For moviegoers around the world, the sight of so many pieces of fire apparatus pealing out of one fire station became unforgettably thrilling, especially to children.

Not as well remembered among the countless stories involving Fire Station 27 was a rescue call that was the longest in duration of any in the history of the LAFD. On October 24, 1931, Rescue 2 was called to the old Benedict Hospital, 6324 Leland Way, where a newborn, Henry Adams Morse, Jr., was near death while struggling to breathe. The Hollywood fire station's Rescue 2 firefighters took turns during the next 204 hours and 10 minutes while using an inhalator to keep the infant alive and out of danger.

One of those Rescue 2 firefighters was the late Glen J. Bruce. Much later, he received a letter from the boy's mother, Mrs. Virginia Morse, who said the firefighters "made it possible for me to enjoy the babyhood of my son . . . by working over him with your resuscitator for 204 long hours. From the time you gentlemen were called, until your job was successfully finished, you each seemed to be personally interested in pulling him through and not as though it was just another case. A mother does not forget. Henry is 21 today, six-feet, two-inches tall, weighs 200 pounds and has perfect health. He is a wonderful living example of the tireless efforts put out by our firemen and especially the rescue crews . . . Thank you, with all my heart, for what you did 21 years ago today."

Among the first thing firefighters learn is that deadly danger often lurks where and when it is least expected. At 4:44 p.m., Saturday, September 14, 1930, Engine 10 and Truck 11 were

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Capt. Elwood Henry
Engine 10
Died from injuries in fall during rescue
September 14, 1930

dispatched from their 1615 South Hill Street station to the multi-story Fiskin Building, a furniture wholesaler at 919 East Pico Boulevard. Captain Elwood Henry of Engine 10 was serving as acting district (battalion) chief and answered the rescue alarm.

Firefighters found Daniel Gonzales, 5, one of the several youngsters who had been playing in the elevator shaft, clinging to an interior window ledge. The boy was critically injured when squeezed between the elevator cage and the shaft. Truck 11 raised a 50-foot Bangor ladder, brought the boy down and he was rushed to Central Receiving Hospital. Henry was assured that all other youngsters had fled the building and was preparing to leave when he was told that another boy was trapped in the shaft. Henry went back inside and, while looking up the shaft, slipped and fell head-first 15-feet to the concrete floor of the elevator pit. Henry, 42, died at 9:10 that evening of skull fractures. The report that a second youngster was in the shaft proved to be false.

Unlike most large city departments during the depression, the LAFD seems to have escaped widespread incendiary fires set by professional arsonists hired by businessmen in financial trouble. A major explanation lies in the effectiveness of the arson bureau which earned a national reputation for its scientific investigation techniques. With photographs from the bureau of photography and the assistance of police chemists and laboratory technicians, professional torches as well as amateur arsonists were deterred.

Notable, however, was the mysterious explosion and fire which stopped clocks at 7:20 a.m., October 17, 1930, in the 12-story Garment Capitol Building at 217 East Eighth Street a Santee. Hundreds of windows for many blocks around wer shattered. Flames were lapping from fourth floor windows First-arriving Rescue 1, Truck 7 and Engine 23 found dozens o injured running from the garment center building. Truck raised its aerial and Engine 23 took a line up the ladder whil other firefighters put the engine's wagon battery in operation A second alarm was transmitted.

LAFD PHOTO

Around 18 volunteer fire companies were scattered throughout the sparsely-settled San Fernando Valley. Ford trucks, most of them dating to 1923, operated as combination hose and chemical companies.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF DEWEY A. FRENC

Before it occupied its 11242 Laurel Canyon Boulevard station, Engine 75 wa housed in quarters built inside the 1932 Olympic Village atop Baldwin Hills.

Even as the last of 48 burned and lacerated workers wer being taken to hospitals, investigators, aided by photographer and the police, began looking for the cause. The explosion an fire originated in Beverly Hills Frocks, Inc. The fire and polic arson team discovered and photographed an uncapped natura gas pipe in the dress factory. Hyman Schuman, owner, said hi firm did not use gas. Arson investigators confirmed his statement. All machines in his factory were electrically-powered.

Schuman said the explosion occurred as he was turning of the burglar alarm system preparatory to opening for business He admitted to labor problems. Investigators found many other tenants in the garment center building were having simila problems as union organizers sought to sign up poorly pai women workers. An arson investigator later theorized that combination of "natural gas and gasoline, set off by an electrical contrivance," caused the $1 million explosion and fire. I was then the worst downtown explosion in the city's history

Another downtown fire which otherwise would have rate only a footnote in the history of the LAFD was a major catalys for an idea that resulted in a new type of fire apparatus and new approach to initial fire attack. At 6:22 a.m., February 2 1931, Westlake received an alarm from the four-story brick J. Newberry store at 445 South Broadway. First-arriving companies, slowed by morning rush-hour trolley and automobile traffic, found the building was heavily-charged with smoke. Second alarm apparatus was seriously delayed by traffic as wer some 40 pieces of other equipment called out later.

By 7 a.m., downtown traffic was in gridlock. Automobile and trolleys were backed up for a mile in all directions. Th traffic glut prevented fire companies from getting close to th fire building. Engines took suction at hydrants blocks away a firefighters extended their hoselines by hand for several block to the burning Newberry store. Truckmen laddered the roo and were ventilating smoke from the north end when fire weakened supports collapsed the south end of the roof. If th roof had collapsed under them, 14 firefighters would hav fallen into the flames.

OLESALE
EWELERS

Downtown traffic went into gridlock, February 25, 1931, when the four-story brick J.J. Newberry store, 445 South Broadway, was engulfed. Traffic congestion seriously delayed fire apparatus and led to Chief Engineer Scott's concept of a super fire engine: The Manifold-Duplex system.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF

The Newberry store burned throughout the morning and ell into the afternoon as all downtown area police were speal-called to attempt to unravel what was probably the worst affic jam in the city's history up to that time. Not until the vening rush-hour was starting were police able to alleviate ongestion. Newberry's losses were put at $450,000 with 10,000 additional smoke and water damage to adjoining uildings.

The Newberry nightmare and other downtown fires where affic congestion delayed apparatus response and prevented uick fire-attack during those first few critical minutes after a re is discovered, was a problem ideally-suited to Scott's ingeuity and open-minded willingness to discard traditional ethods in favor of better approaches. Since horse-drawn aparatus days, the fire service's traditional concept entailed uick-attack with small, chemical-hose wagons which could opefully knock down, or at least slow, the progress of a fire ntil the heavy-duty large-pumping capacity pumpers arrived.

Scott conceived a new type of super fire engine which comined first-alarm fast response with quick-hitting firepower apable of quicker delivery of large volumes of water at high ressures through many hoselines and master stream applinces than conventional pumpers. If these super engines could et there before traffic congestion delayed fire-attack, many mall fires could be prevented from turning into large blazes.

Scott, who favored two-piece engine companies because of eir greater versatility, conceptualized his super engines as umpers capable of delivering 2000-to-3000-gallons-per-minte to a hose wagon apparatus with many water discharge utlets. A minimum of 10 firefighters would be required to perate each of the four systems he planned. Extra manpower vould be supplied by Squad 23, which was to become known s The Green Hornets (as distinguished by their green helmet pieces) for their wide-ranging firefighting and rescue skills. Squad 23 was the first LAFD company to carry self-contained breathing apparatus for all firefighters assigned to it.

Coincidental with Scott's thinking and ideally-suited to his concept, was American LaFrance's announcement, the same year as the Newberry fire, of the development of a 12-cylinder V-block, 240-horsepower engine rated at 1500-gallons-per-minute. Scott's plan was to adapt American LaFrance's greater pumping capacity breakthrough by mounting two of these pumps on each of four duplex (meaning two pumps) engines. The remainder of his super engine system would consist of four large hose-carrying manifold wagons with up to 17 water discharge outlets on each apparatus. Largely because of the depression, Scott had to shelve the idea until the department could afford them and American LaFrance could design and build these four super engines to the LAFD's specifications.

While Scott was visualizing super fire engines of the future and the department was making-do with the aging apparatus it had during the depression, the LAFD, in 1932, changed station designations to better identify locations of all apparatus. Instead of Engine 2 and Truck 10 at 2127 East First Street, for example, the companies officially became designated as Fire Station 2: Engine 2 and Truck 2. All other equipment in every firehouse was renumbered to correspond to that of the station.

Firefighters at Fire Station 2 were getting accustomed to the change when a minor fire on the afternoon of April 10, 1932, sent Combination Chemical and Hose Wagon 2 to 452½ South St. Louis Street. Firefighter Silvestre Madrid, 38, serving as acting captain, took his seat alongside Auto Fireman Alfred H. Dale.

Their 62-horsepower Stutz wagon was responding south on St. Louis Street when it was struck near the rear end by an

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Firefighter Silvestre Madrid
Engine 2
Died from injuries suffered in a collision with an automobile while responding to a fire
April 21, 1932

eastbound automobile driven by Helen Martin. Firefighter Walter Dodd, thrown from the tailboard was not hurt. The impact spun the Stutz almost completely around. The apparatus overturned and pinned Madrid and Dale underneath it.

Dodd ran back to the fire station for help. The firefighters extricated them and they were rushed to Central Receiving Hospital. Dale's pelvic and spinal injuries necessitated his retirement on a disability pension. Madrid died 11 days later of multiple fractures, other injuries and pneumonia. His survivors included a wife and daughter. Martin, found guilty of manslaughter, was jailed for six months and ordered to pay Madrid's funeral costs.

At 5:54 p.m., March 10, 1933, Los Angeles was jolted by a major earthquake — second only in intensity to that which hit San Francisco in 1906 — which severely damaged Long Beach. The quake destroyed LAFD Fire Station 21 at 1187 East 52nd Street, and badly damaged Fire Station 22 at 4352 South Main Street, as well as Fire Station 63 at 1713 Speedway in Venice. Station 21 was moved to temporary rented quarters at 4925 Compton Avenue until its house was rebuilt. Station 22 was located in a building on an adjacent lot until repairs were made by 1938. A new station was constructed in 1948 at 4366 South Main street. Station 63's house was rebuilt.

Los Angeles suffered its own disaster a few months later when a fire in Griffith Park demonstrated the ferocity and speed with which a small brush fire can become catastrophic. The fire, possibly caused by a careless smoker, started in th Mineral Wells Canyon area near the old Los Angeles Zoo, ami 110-degree temperatures and unusually low humidity on tha afternoon of October 3, 1933. Working in the park at the tim were 3780 men employed as part of the Los Angeles Count welfare relief program.

Although none of them were trained firefighters and thei supervisors were not either, many were ordered or volunteere to go down the Dam Canyon slope to attack what looked to b a small fire. At 2:26 p.m., the Westlake Signal Office receive simultaneous alarms from the Glendale Fire Department and park worker. Glendale reported the fire was in Griffith Par alongside Riverside Drive. The worker gave a more specifi location: Block 36, near the golf course clubhouse. Engine 5 and Hose 27 were dispatched with Battalion Chief John A Wilson and Assistant Chief Otto B. Lewis, along with 5 Mountain Patrolmen.

The amateur firefighters had set a backfire in hopes o blocking progress of the fire. A sudden wind change drove shaft of flame up the slopes of Dam Canyon. The terrifie workers clawed their way up the sides of the canyon, but wer overwhelmed by flames which traveled faster than they coul have run if the terrain was flat. Firefighters quickly containe the fire to a small area. Inside the fire perimeter, 29 worker died of thermal burns and more than 150 others were treate for burns and other injuries. The blackened area encompasse only 46.83 acres.

Despite the depression-caused need to hold-the-line i maintaining fire protection services and a $50,000 cut in th LAFD's budget, Mayor Frank L. Shaw was able to announce i 1934 that the Insurance Exchange was reducing fire insuranc rates in the city's residential buildings by as much as 18 percent and by five percent in commercial occupancies. "The cut," said Shaw, "is testimonial to the efficiency of the city fir department in past years." Fire losses in Los Angeles, th

Worst loss of life fire of the LAFD's first century of service killed 29 men October 3, 1933, when workers clearing brush in Griffith Park [illegible] by a flash fire which burned [illegible] acres.

yor pointed out, had averaged $1.60 per capita during the
vious 10 years, compared to a national average of between
and $4.

Although the economic news was better in 1935 as the na-
n began to recover from the depression, the year is most
nembered in the LAFD for the deaths in the line of duty of
ee firefighters: the most in any year since the department
rted in 1886.

Days of torrential rains had caused heavy flooding, especial-
in the West Los Angeles, Mar Vista and Venice lowlands.
gine 43's dormitory at 7620 National Boulevard, Palms,
s under two-inches of water when the company was dis-
tched at 3:14 a.m., April 8, to a report that four people were
pped in automobiles on the Sawtelle Boulevard bridge over
alnut Creek (now a Los Angeles County Flood Control
annel) north of Westminster Avenue.

Captain Fred W. Toenjes and his three firefighters found the
rmally-dry Walnut Creek was eight-feet-deep in swiftly-
wing water and storm-tossed debris. The firefighters at-
hed a lifeline to the Seagrave engine and made their way out
to the bridge to rescue four people trapped in two auto-
obiles and, hopefully, a herd of goats which had taken refuge
ere.

As the rescues were being completed, a large wooden shed
ich was acting as a dike upstream from the bridge, was
ept away by the fierce current. Toenjes and Acting Engineer
ed Kessler were knocked off the bridge by the resulting tidal
ave and pitched into the flood waters which whisked them
t of sight downstream. Engine 62 and Truck 62 were specia
lled to help in the search for the missing firefighters. Kessler
s found marooned shortly after 4 a.m., on a tiny island about
0-feet downstream. He had managed to grab a shrub as the
rrent swept him toward the ocean. Kessler pulled himself
to the muddy bank.

Shortly after dawn, firefighters found Toenjes' body jack-
ifed around a eucalyptus tree about half-a-mile downstream.
s helmet, boots and coat were gone. Apparently he had shed
e heavy turnout gear while attempting to swim to safety, but
s struck in the head and knocked unconscious by debris
rried along by the raging floodwaters. Toenjes, 38, was sur-
ved by his wife and two sons.

The department's first loss of two firefighters at one blaze
sulted from a flash fire, September 7, 1935, in the Mission
inted Fabric Company, 1481 East Fourth Street. Fabrics were
ing waterproofed by running them through vats containing
ghly-volatile liquids. Vapors from one of the vats ignited.
ames flashed throughout the building. Westlake received
ree alarms at 10:16 a.m., and transmitted Box 6122 at Fourth
d Gless Streets, calling Engines 2, 5, and 24. Trucks 17 and
, Salvage 24 and Acting Battalion Chief George Dyer.

Capt. Lawrence W. Krumsiek and Firefighter George A.
amron stretched a line inside the front door and quickly
ocked down the flames as the other engine companies laid
se from other sides of the two-story brick building. Water
s ankle-deep. Floating on top of it were highly-flammable
aterproofing chemicals whose vapors suddenly reignited.
umsiek and Damron were instantly engulfed in fire which
elted their helmets and burned away their turnout coats and
ots before firefighters could smother the flames. Ambu-
nces were called as firefighters renewed their fire attack. The CO-2 Wagon was special-called from Fire Station 17 to help in snuffing the flammable liquid-caused flames.

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Capt. Fred W. Toenjes
Engine 43
Drowned during flood rescue
April 8, 1935

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Capt. Lawrence W. Krumsiek
Engine 2
Died of burns in commercial building flash fire
September 8, 1935

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

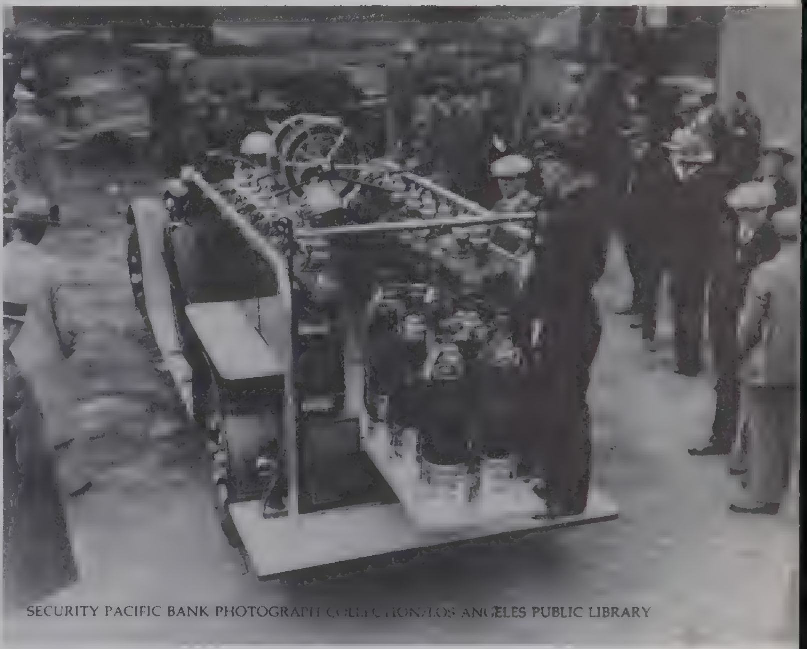
Firefighter George A. Damron
Engine 2
Died of burns in commercial building flash fire
September 12, 1935

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Firefighter Paul Shapro
Engine 22
Died of heart failure while sliding pole after fire alarm
April 5, 1936

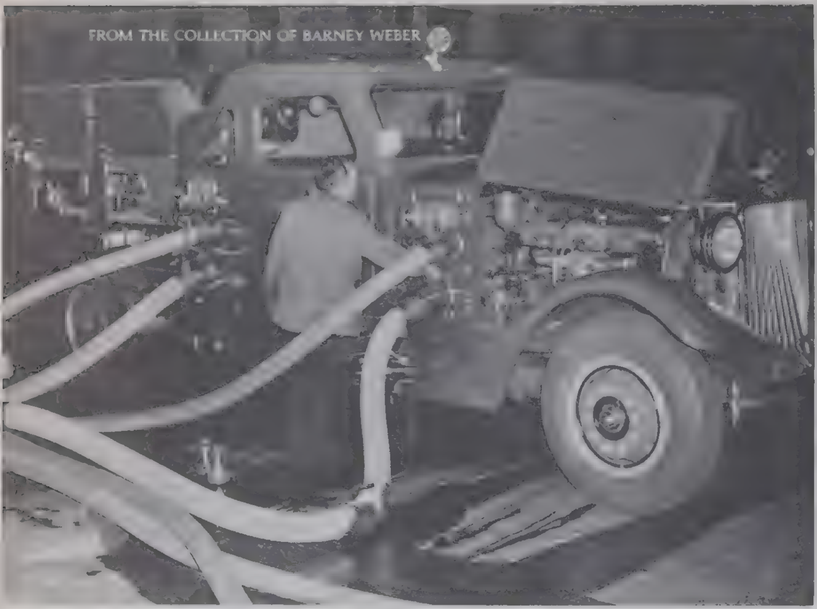
Krumsiek, 38, died the following day. He was survived by his wife, a son, a daughter and two brothers: LAFD Firefighters Herbert and Carl Krumsiek. Damron, 33, died September 12, the day of Krumsiek's funeral. He was survived by his wife and two daughters.

The LAFD lost still another member in the line of duty the following year. When the big bell in Fire Station 22 began clanging out an alarm at 4:55 a.m., April 5, 1936, from the box at 41st Street and Broadway, Firefighter Paul Shapro and the other firefighters at the station dashed for the sliding pole. The



SECURITY PACIFIC BANK PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION/LOS ANGELES PUBLIC LIBRARY

A LAFD one-of-a-kind: CO2 Company No. 1. The 1928 Studebaker carried many carbon dioxide fire extinguishers for flammable liquid fires and was housed at Fire Station 17.



Engineer Barney Weber operates Engine 9's American LaFrance Duplex pumper at second alarm Don Juan Shirt Company fire, 9th and Wall Streets, about 1940. Both fore-and-aft mounted 1500-gallon-per-minute pumps are operating. Forward pump is supplying Engine 9's manifold wagon, while the rear pump is delivering water to Engine 28.

engine was first-due at the box. Shapro slid the pole and fell dead of a heart attack. Shapro, 39, was survived by his wife and seven children who would forever know that he died while answering a false alarm.

The LAFD paid scant attention to its 50th birthday, February 1, 1936. During those 50 years the department had grown from its original four stations, two steamers, two hose reels, a hose wagon, ladder truck, 31 paid firefighters, 380 reserve callmen, to one of the largest departments in the United States. At that half-century mark, the LAFD had 1700 firefighters, 75 fire stations and as many pumpers and hose wagons, 20 trucks, seven salvage companies, five rescue units and specialized equipment including a water tower, a CO-2 wagon, a cellar pump at Fire Station 16 and foam companies. There were around two dozen volunteer companies extending from Chatsworth in the San Fernando Valley, to Playa Del Rey, the Los Angeles Municipal Airport (Los Angeles International Airport) and to the harbor area. It is not known how many volunteers were affiliated with the LAFD at the time but the figure likel approximated at least 100.

With only around 18 volunteer companies scattere throughout the San Fernando Valley, an area 25-square-mile larger than Chicago, fire protection problems were critica Small Ford Trucks, most of then dating to 1923 and operatin as combination hose and chemical companies, were inadequat to handle the increasing incidence of fires. On October 7, 193 the then-famous Winnetka Poultry Farm near Canoga Par and 7000 laying hens were destroyed in a $15,000 fire. Les than a year later, a blaze on July 16, 1938, destroyed the Rosco Feed and Fuel Company and the adjacent Roscoe Lumber Company at 8129 Sunland Boulevard.

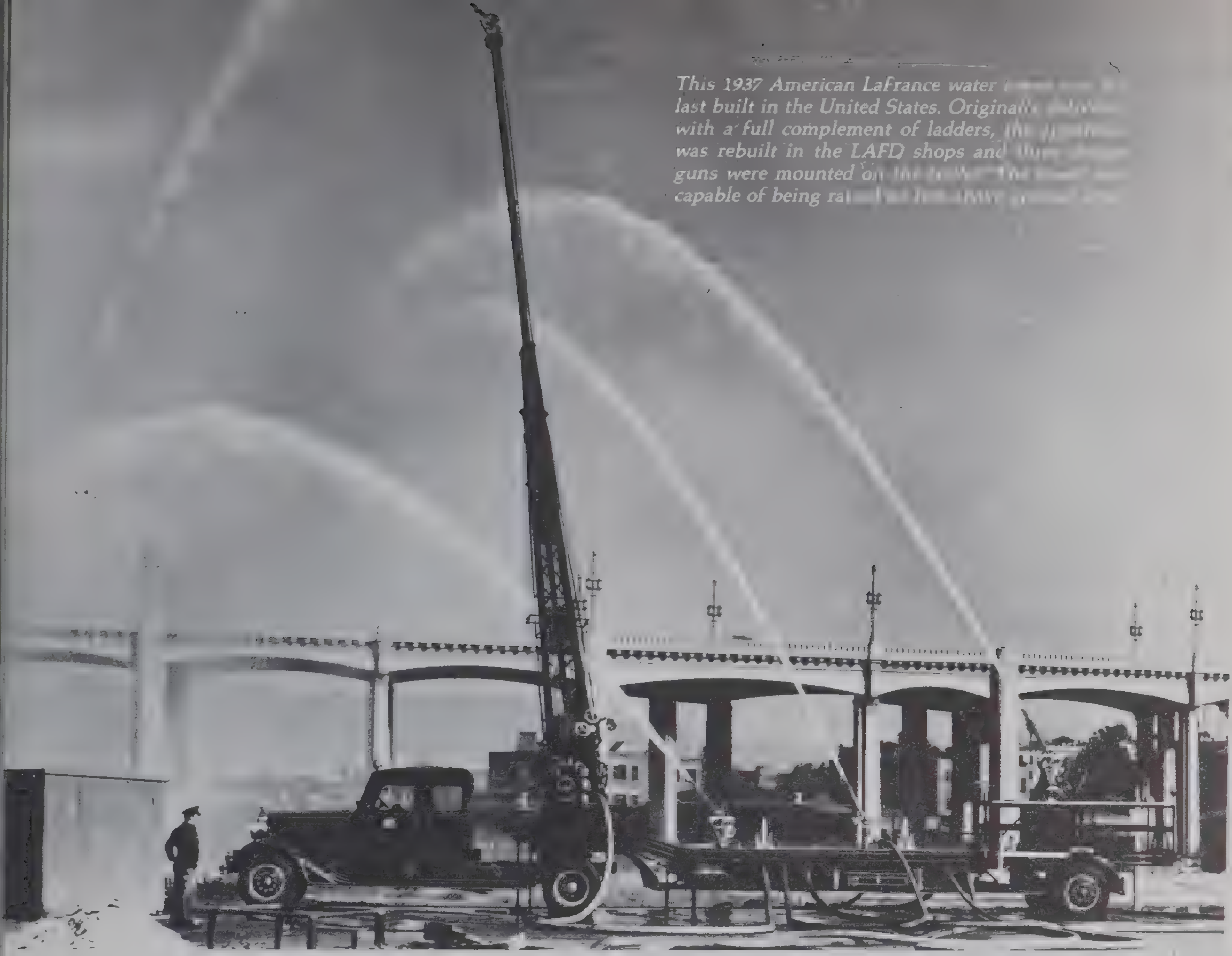
The worst valley fire of that period ravaged the sprawlin two-block complex of the Fernando Milling & Supply Company, 6104 Van Nuys Boulevard. Although Fire Station 39 wa only a short distance away, the flames had gained such headway that there was no stopping them. Lost in the 3 a.m November 5, 1938, blaze were a large one-story mill and tw four-story grain elevators. Damages were more than $300,00

When the long depression-caused drought in the purchas of new apparatus ended, the first two engines purchased and i service in 1937 were Scott's long-awaited American LaFranc Metropolitan Duplex two-stage centrifugal pumpers with fore-and-aft mounted V-12 engines of 250-horsepower apiece. Th front engine served the dual purpose of powering the apparatus and pumping. The rear engine was solely used for pumping. The eventually-purchased four duplexes could deliver between 2000 and 3000-gallons-per-minute. Each pumper ha four water suction inlets and eight three-and-one-half-inc discharge outlets. The department completed its Manifold Duplex Systems with the purchase of four hose-carrying manifold wagons: one American LaFrance, two Seagraves and Mack.

While these super engine systems had relatively minor differences among them, the manifolds generally carried 1200 feet of three-and-one-half-inch hose which was packed in th hose beds in such a way that two supply lines could simultaneously be laid from the hydrant to the fire. In what was th LAFD's first use of transverse hose beds, the manifolds als carried additional hose of smaller size in behind-the-cab compartments accessible from both sides of the apparatus. Mounted on each manifold was a large caliber, fireboat-type of wago battery. Also on-board was a booster tank of between 80-and 100 gallon capacity which fed a reel of hose for small fires.

The four Manifold-Duplex companies were stationed i

The essence of the Manifold-Duplex System was to spot the hose-carrying manifold wagon as close as possible to the front of the fire building. Water was supplied by the 2000-to-3000-gallon-per-minute duplex pumper.



This 1937 American LaFrance water [illegible] last built in the United States. Origina[illegible] with a full complement of ladders, [illegible] was rebuilt in the LAFD shops and [illegible] guns were mounted on [illegible] capable of being ra[illegible]

owntown houses, notably Fire Stations 3, 9 and at Fire Station in the east side commercial and manufacturing district. The urth Manifold-Duplex System was assigned to Fire Station in Hollywood and was many times used at large fires in otion picture studios. On first alarms in their districts, the anifold wagon preceded the duplex pumper. Dropping off ne or two supply lines at the nearest hydrant, the manifold eally laid hose and spotted itself in front of the fire building. he duplex took the hydrant and supplied the manifold. On ach side of the manifold wagon were discharge gates which ould supply any desired combination of up to 17 hoselines nd the wagon battery.

By positioning the manifold wagon as close as possible to e fire building and supplying it with duplex engine water in uantities and pressures equivalent to that of around three onventional pumpers, Scott achieved his goal of quick, hard-itting attack before traffic congestion hampered operations nd perhaps enabled a small fire to grow into one of greater larm proportions. The Manifold-Duplex System was unique o Los Angeles and continued in service until 1964, when the st of them was replaced by 1500- and 2000-gallon-per-minute rown triple combination pumpers at Fire Station 17. Indica-ve of Scott's foresight is the fact that his super engines were e predecessors of New York's famous 8800-gallon-per-min-te Super Pumper System which, bearing similarities to Los ngeles', did not go in service until 27 years later, October, 965.

Among the other apparatus first ordered after the depression as the LAFD's first 100-foot metal aerial ladder which was elivered by Seagrave in 1938 and initially assigned to Fire tation 3. Also purchased at that time were five American aFrance triple combination pumpers which, themselves, were to become legendary, too, in the department, if only for the name: Lulubelles. Like the duplex pumpers, which their configuration closely-resembled, these triples were powered by American LaFrance V-12 250-horsepower engines. Unlike the duplexes, the Lulubelles were assigned to outlying residential districts, including Fire Stations 31, 50, 58, 67 and 68. Four of them were rated at 1500-gallons-per-minute and the fifth at 1000. The Lulubelle name derived from a cartoon-like character who was, like the pumpers, big, heavy and clumsy. Although Lulubelles saw many years of service, they were prone to axle, braking and maintenance problems. They were virtually useless as hill climbers and therefore inappropriate for use in brush firefighting.

Also new to the LAFD fleet in 1937 was an American LaFrance water tower, the last built by any apparatus manufacturer in the United States. Departments opted for the greater versatility of large-calibre stream operation from aerial ladders, and, later, elevating platforms and their offshoots. The tower was intended to replace the aging Gorter. Originally assigned to Fire Station 24 at 204 South Hewitt Street, the apparatus was designated as a combination water tower and city service truck because of the various lengths of ladders it carried: up to 50-foot Bangors.

Where aerial ladders were turntable-mounted on conventional truck companies, was a horizontal tower mast which extended beyond the tillerman's seat. The tower was manually raised, with the aid of coil springs, to a height of 65-feet above street level. A unique feature of the tower was its capability of being operated while slightly raised from its bed; thus providing a super-sized water cannon that predated similar apparatus in other cities, including Chicago's "Mighty Mo".

The apparatus' dual personality proved impractical and it was sent to the LAFD shops for conversion to a full-purpose water tower. The ladders were removed and three deluge guns were added: two of them permanently mounted fore-and-aft and a portable gun amidships. Six intake manifolds were installed to enable pumpers to supply the tower which packed a 6000-gallon-per-minute wallop. The converted apparatus was assigned to Fire Station 3, where it remained until Water Tower 3 was deactivated after the Korean War; largely because of its infrequent usage. The tower became part of Griffith Park's Travel Town exhibit of vehicles of all types.

Axiomatic to firefighting is the recognition that even the best-equipped and trained fire department is no match for the dangers inherent in the nature of fire control. August 3, 1937, was one of those fire season days which LAFD firefighters dread as Santa Ana winds and low humidity preheat the city to the point of ignition of many fires. The department was busy that day with dozens of fires. Engine 7, then housed at 328 East 24th Street, was backing into quarters at 3:10 p.m., after moving up to a firehouse left vacant by a second alarm, when they got an alarm to 1276 West 29th Street.

Thick black smoke looming up southeast of the station told them that, as the first-in company, they were going to have plenty of work to do. The fire was in an old wooden church with a wood shingle roof. Flames were swirling through the 40-foot steeple when Engine 7 arrived. Firefighter Wilbert Vogel made the hydrant connection, then ran inside the front door of the church to help with the hoseline.

Even as Vogel took the nozzle, a portion of the roof collapsed. Engine 7 firefighters were buried under a cascade of timbers, plaster and other debris. A five-inch-square timber that formed a flagpole extending up through the choir loft and the steeple crashed down with trip-hammer force. It struck Vogel and crushed his chest. Vogel, 38, died six days later. Survivors included a widow, two sons and a daughter.

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Firefighter Wilbert Vogel
Engine 7
Died of injuries suffered in church fire
August 9, 1937

A convoluted chain of events which started with a mayoral attack upon Scott's integrity and ended with the worst scandal in the political history of Los Angeles, began to unfold on June 2, 1936, when Shaw's appointed fire commission ordered Scott to reinstate a captain who was discharged for unbecoming conduct. William A. Myers was fired five years earlier during Mayor John C. Porter's administration. Porter's fire commission approved Scott's action.

Little is known of the circumstances surrounding Myers' discharge, other than he had served the department for 24 years, was an outspoken critic of Scott and his policies and was active in the California State Firemen's Association. The captain lost his prolonged court suit for $3000 in back wages after Mayor Frank L. Shaw took office on July 1, 1933. The mayor immediately appointed his younger brother, Joe, a recently retired Navy lieutenant, as his political secretary. Myers brought his case to the attention of the Shaw brothers.

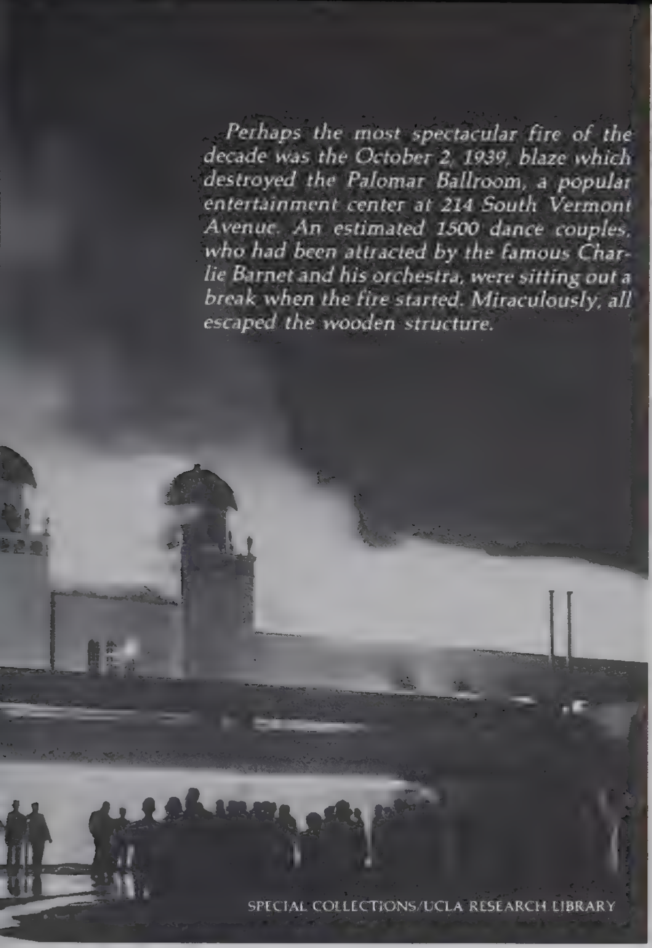
The mayor made no secret of his intention to rid the city of as many department heads as he could force or intimidate out of office. They would be replaced by those politically close to him. Apparently Scott was next in line to go when the Myers matter surfaced two weeks after the mayor forced the discharge of Parks Superintendent Frank Shearer on grounds of "general inefficiency". Getting rid of Scott was a formidable challenge.

Scott was the most famous and highly-respected fire chief in the world. Shaw, a former city councilman and county supervisor, was unknown outside of Los Angeles. Scott's impeccable record could only be tarnished by intimidating him into resigning. The Myers case seemed to be an ideal ploy as Shaw blatantly usurped the chief engineer's administrative responsibilities.

Upon announcing Myers' reinstatement, Shaw appointee, John M. Larronde, president of the fire commission, issued a public statement that said Scott's firing of Myers was "one of the most flagrant cases that has ever come to (the board's) attention where a man has been removed because of department politics." Larronde also warned that any attempt by the chief engineer to block the reinstatement would be considered "subversive to the best interests and harmony in the department".

If Scott was silenced, the firefighters were not. A petition signed by 90 percent of the department's 1700 members was sent to the Fire and Police Protective League via their representative, Battalion Chief John H. Alderson. The petition demanded that the league take appropriate action to counteract what the firefighters said was "a slap in the face" of Scott. The mayor and the fire commission back-pedaled and ruled that Myers would be reinstated providing an opening occurred. LAFD personnel records indicate that Myers never returned to duty.

Scott, meanwhile, learned that LAFD appointments and promotions were for sale to the highest bidders. Civil service entrance exam questions and answers cost whatever the traffic would bear: $100 or more. For a fee, firefighters could have their civil service grades altered to insure promotion. An auto fireman's position cost $300 and a captain's job went for $500. (The position of lieutenant was abolished in June, 1927.) The system was alternately open and furtive, always complex, and permeated most, if not all, other city departments, especially



Perhaps the most spectacular fire of the decade was the October 2, 1939, blaze which destroyed the Palomar Ballroom, a popular entertainment center at 214 South Vermont Avenue. An estimated 1500 dance couples, who had been attracted by the famous Charlie Barnet and his orchestra, were sitting out a break when the fire started. Miraculously, all escaped the wooden structure.

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the police and civil service.

Buying and selling jobs and promotions was openly and cynically discussed among firefighters and those who wished to become firefighters. Many of those involved rationalized their participation by the fact that the system was commonplace in nearly every large American city. As the scam developed, a codework of terminology arose. Conspirators were known as "Buyers" and "Sellers" and ranged from the lowest ranks through at least one assistant chief. Anyone desiring civil service exam questions and answers, or to have point scores altered to win a promotion, became a buyer who had to ocate a seller in the department. The seller, in turn, was linked to a "Window". The Window was the department member vho initiated the process after the fee was agreed upon between the buyer and seller.

Abuses were frequent. A firefighter wishing to become a captain was sometimes squeezed for $600, which was $100 more than the going rate. The seller at the Window kept the $100 and forwarded the $500 via a messenger who, in turn, passed it along to another messenger. Only the buyer's name was known as the payoff passed along the chain. Exam questions and answers came back to the buyer by still another secret chain of different messengers.

The subterfuge was so cleverly orchestrated that nobody knew, or at least admitted, who ultimately received the payoff, but the name of Joe Shaw was so often mentioned that it became commonly accepted that the money was ending up in his office via mysterious boxes that were placed around City Hall. Many suspected the graft was intended as a "political contribution" to Mayor Shaw's future plans.

Those who were circumventing the civil service process became known as members of the FLS Club. The initials were, of course, the same as the mayor's. FLS Club members who appeared before oral boards for promotional exams wore a rose in their lapel buttonhole as a silent, but unmistakable, identification that the candidate had paid his fee and the board was to act accordingly when awarding point scores. It is not known how many firefighters were involved, but the consensus among those who were members of the department at the time put the figure at several hundred or more.

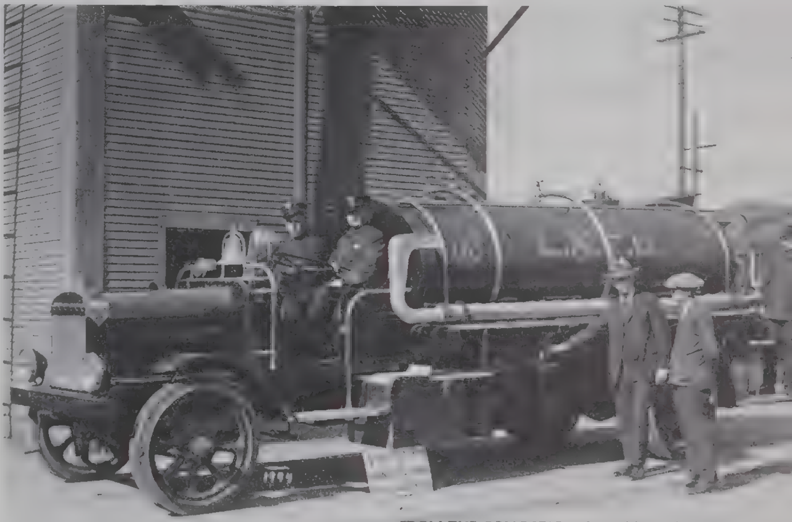
Scott, obviously, knew what was happening. Most retirees are at a loss to explain why a chief of Scott's integrity did not immediately confront the issue headon. He had to know that, sooner or later, the time bomb in the department would explode in his office. They unanimously agreed that Scott was in no way personally-involved in job peddling. Their speculations range from the belief that Scott hoped the problem would simply disappear, that he had isolated himself, or that chief officers in his administration had kept information from him.

Whatever the case, Scott surely felt powerless in light of the widely-known recognition that payoffs pervaded city government as a whole. There was also the suggested possibility that Scott hesitated to take action because so many of those involved were close friends and any action on his part could, at the least, cost them their jobs, pensions and perhaps send them to prison.

The fact of the matter is that Scott did take action, but did not, for obvious reasons, share the results of his investigation with Shaw. Scott could not determine the names of everyone involved. Those he suspected of complicity were called to his office. Many of them admitted to their participation in the payoff schemes. Scott wrote a detailed report based upon his investigation and probably that of his close confidant, Deputy Chief Bert M. Blake.

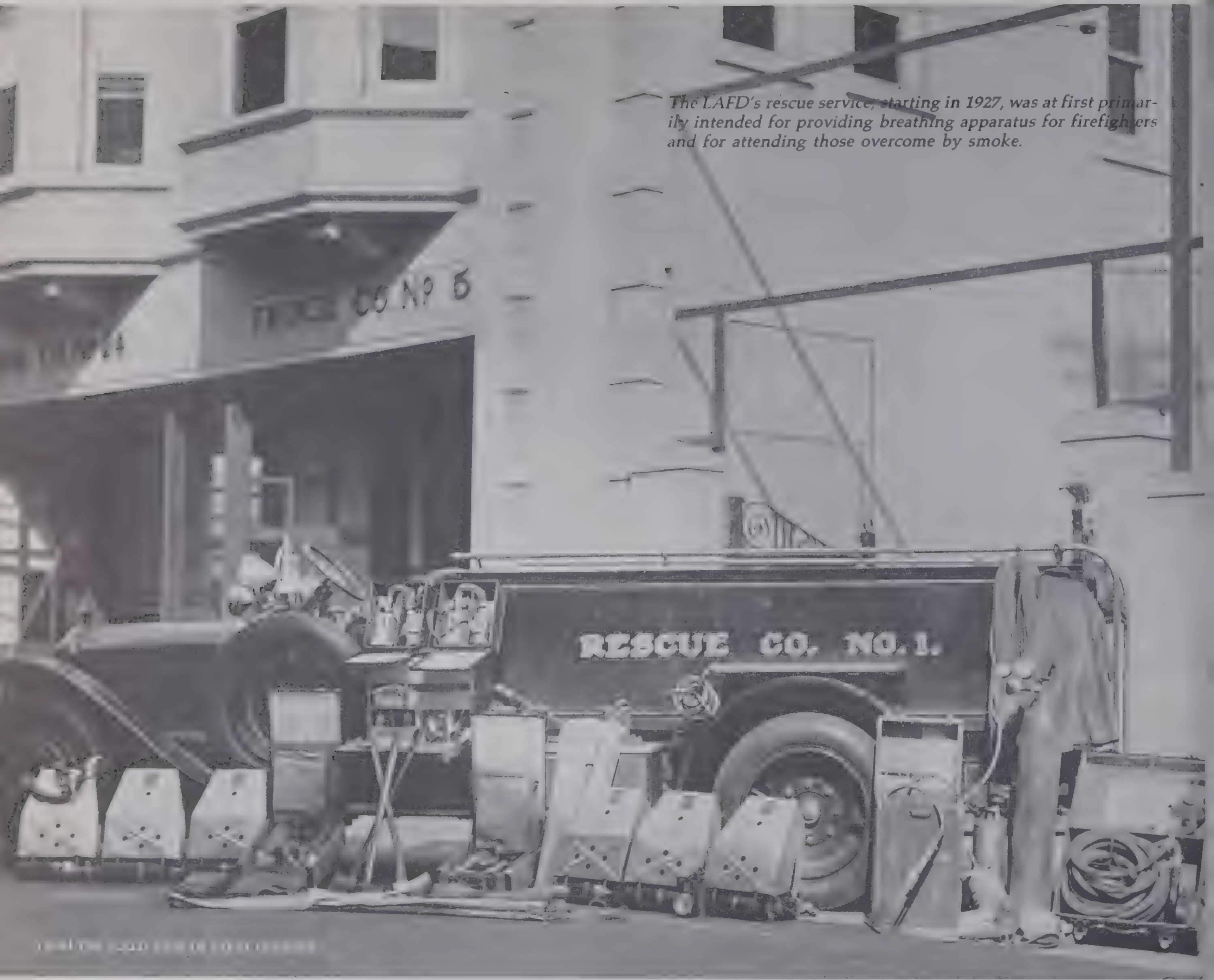
Constant allegations regarding Shaw's conduct of city affairs led to a special recall election. Shaw was voted out of office on September 26, 1938. By then, his name was nationally-known because he was the first mayor of a large city to be removed from office by a recall election. Running on a reform platform, the electorate at the same time voted Superior Court Judge Fletcher Bowron into the mayor's office.

Mayor Bowron, swept into office by a two-to-one vote, pledged to use a broad broom to sweep the city clean of corruption. Alderson was a close friend of Bowron's and the league contributed heavily to his election. As Bowron began weeding out the facts, Scott is believed to have turned over the complete



FROM THE COLLECTION OF LARRY HOERNER

As petrochemical fire problems multiplied in Los Angeles, the department built four identical liquid foam-carrying rigs on Moreland chassis. They were stationed at Engines 17, 36, 49 and 47.



The LAFD's rescue service, starting in 1927, was at first primarily intended for providing breathing apparatus for firefighters and for attending those overcome by smoke.

documentation of his investigation to the mayor.

In history's light, it is curious to note that the scandal was widely-reported in newspapers and magazines throughout the country. What may have been commonplace in other cities became news when corruption tainted Los Angeles' traditionally clean reputation, especially that of its renowned fire department. Curious, too, is the fact that former Mayor Shaw was never charged with any crime.

The effect upon the department's morale was profound, especially as many firefighters who had paid dearly for promotions never got them after Shaw's recall. Members worthy of promotion felt betrayed by a city administration that had put money over competence by subverting a civil service process which hired and promoted men who were unfit to wear LAFD badges, much less gold badges of leadership. Many of those who were involved, fearing the outcome of Bowron's investigations, surely based upon Scott's input, took early retirement. During 1939, for example, 54 firefighters left the job; about twice as many who had retired or quit during each of the three previous years.

Also concerned were fire insurance companies who feared that a department which had earned worldwide acclaim would turn into an inept organization. Jay Stevens, chief of the bureau of fire prevention for the National Board of Fire Underwriters, was loaned to the city to make a report on what needed to be done to clean up the mess. The board could not have made a wiser choice. Stevens was as respected in his realm as his friend, Scott, was in the fire service.

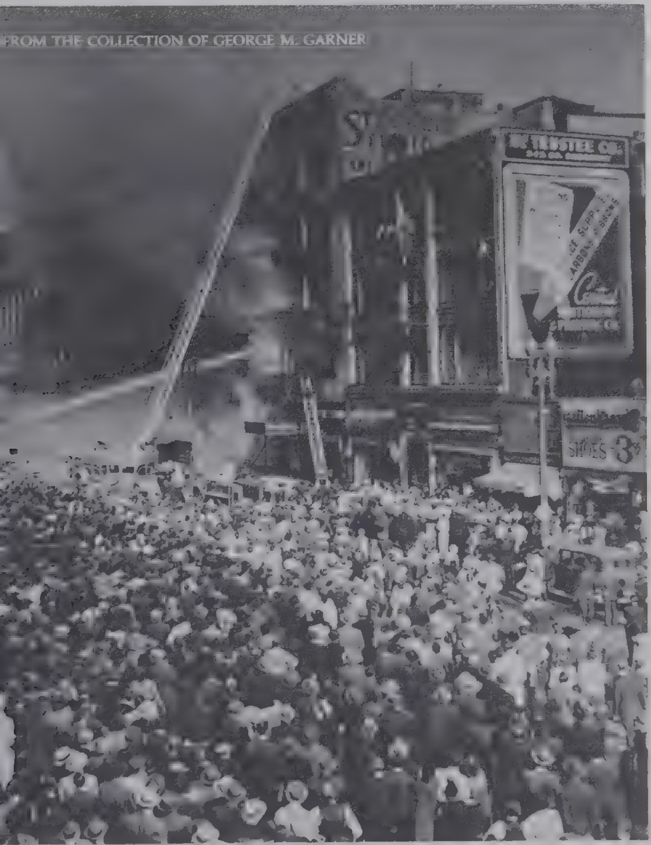
Shaw's brother, Joe, and former Civil Service Commissioner William A. Cormack were charged in 1939 with 66 counts of altering public documents relating to the job-buying and promotion payoffs in the fire department. The trial lasted six weeks. Among those testifying were firefighters who told of their complicity in the shakedowns. The most damaging testimony was that of Retired Battalion 5 Chief Guy Kuykendall, who took his pension on November 10, 1938. Turning state's witness in exchange for immunity, Kuykendall testified that he had peddled questions and answers to civil service exams and had collected thousands of dollars from firefighters seeking promotions. Kuykendall said he turned the money over to Joe Shaw.

On March 23, 1939, after a six-week trial, the jury was out but a few hours before it returned guilty verdicts on 63 of the 66 counts against Shaw and Cormack. Shaw and Cormack appealed the verdict which was overturned and they went free. Stevens' report, released after the trial, said the department was seriously-disorganized and made 11 suggestions for improvements. In pointed references to the scandal, Stevens' recommendations included:

"Utilize, to the fullest extent, the probationary period relating to new members as well as promotions, with emphasis upon the latter so as to eliminate as early as possible during their period of service time, those who are not competent to give the highest degree of service . . . Periodic meetings of all chief officers, including battalion chiefs, should be held in order that the chief engineer may have more intimate knowledge of the workings of the department and at which time he will impart to those officers the department policies . . . A definite plan of inspection of department stations by the chief officers to bring about a more intimate feeling between the heads of the department and the firefighting force."

The department was still reeling from the aftershocks of the trial when firefighters were stunned by a tragic fire in downtown Los Angeles. At 2 p.m., November 6, 1939, an employee of the Los Angeles Novelty Company which occupied the second floor of the Gray Building, 336½ South Broadway, saw smoke. Calling the fire department, he said the fire was at 3336 South Broadway, an address many miles south of the Gray Building. Westlake sent a first alarm assignment which found nothing and called in a false alarm.

A passerby, meanwhile, saw smoke oozing from the second floor windows of the novelty company and at 2:03 p.m., pulled Box 1133 at Broadway and Third Street. Fire Station 3's Manifold-Duplex System was the first apparatus to arrive. The fire appeared to be small. The balance of the first alarm assignment included Engine 4, Manifold-Duplex 5, Engine 16, Trucks 3 and 4, and Acting Chief Rothermel.


FROM THE COLLECTION OF GEORGE M. GARNER

On November 6, 1939, a second-floor fire in the Gray Building, 336½ South Broadway, spread to the three upper floors. Engine 3's Manifold-Duplex system quickly began battering flames with its large gun, while Truck 3 firefighters raised the department's first 100-foot metal aerial ladder to the roof to start smoke ventilation.

Expecting a quick knockdown, firefighters nevertheless laid lines because of the known high-risks in the Gray Building. First floor occupancies included retail stores. Above the novelty wholesaler were millinery manufacturers on the third and fourth floors. The Wetzel Printing Company, with its heavy presses and tons of paper, occupied the top floor of the 40-foot-wide and 150-foot-deep building.

While Engine 3's duplex pumper took a hydrant, the manifold laid supply lines to near the front of the building. Truck 3 raised its 100-feet metal aerial to the roof to begin smoke ventilation. The second floor fire rapidly propagated and flames and smoke spread up the open wooden stairway extending to the fifth floor. Truckmen also laddered the front of the building and began assisting millinery and other workers down fire escapes. Dozens more workers fled to rear fire escapes and would easily have left the building, except that the drop-ladder jammed. As Truck 4 approached and its firefighters saw the increasing loomup, they went to the rear alley. They raised their aerial and saved all the workers.

With fire problems worsening, Rothermel called for a second alarm at 2:18 p.m., which brought Engines 24, 28, Truck 19, Deputy Chief Blake and the chief engineer. Scott quickly special-called an additional manifold-duplex company and Water Tower Truck Company 24, which were ordered to the rear alley adjacent to the large parking lot. The tower's mast was raised and a stream began deluging the upper floors. It was the first — and the last — time in the department's history that three Manifold-Duplex Systems and a water tower were simultaneously operated at a fire.

Firefighters from Manifold-Duplex 3 stretched lines through a second-floor balcony window and began a direct attack. Above them, many tens of thousands of gallons of water bored into the upper-story windows from the three

FROM THE COLLECTION OF BARNEY WEBER

Firefighter Maurice Powell of The Green Hornets (left) and Auto Fireman Porter Marsh of Manifold Wagon 3 direct a powerful stream into the Gray Building fire at 336½ South Broadway.

Manifold Duplex apparatus-supplied exterior attack lines and guns, the water tower and 15 large calibre hoselines being operated inside. Manifold-Duplex 3 firefighters fought their way through thick smoke and had advanced 56-feet into the second floor when a large portion of it collapsed. Firefighter Joseph W. Kacl of Truck 3 dropped through the yawning hole and hit headfirst on the first-floor concrete while a torrent of plaster and debris covered him.

Before firefighters could reach Kacl they heard an ominous rumble above them, followed by a creaking of timbers and the immediate collapse of the fifth floor. The combined weight of the printing presses and water-logged paper, coupled with fire-weakened flooring deep in water, sent the presses and millinery machinery thundering down in a domino-like effect as the fifth floor took the fourth, the third and the second floors with it and pushed all of them onto the first floor.

Despite the deadly threat of more timbers and debris falling upon them, the firefighters tore into the rubble in search of Kacl. Among them was Auto Fireman John C. "Red" Hough, nominally-assigned to Engine 3, but who was Blake's driver. Clawing at debris, rescue efforts continued late into the afternoon when Firefighter Edward W. Jones of Salvage 3 found Kacl's body.

Almost at that instant, firefighters were startled by another telltale rumble and the remaining chunks of the upper floors rained down upon them. All except Jones and Hough managed to escape injury. Jones' legs were crushed by a heavy timber. He was rushed to Central Receiving Hospital. Hough's helmet took the full impact of the falling plank. While dazed, he insisted upon remaining on duty at least until Kacl's body was recovered.

Scott ordered everyone from the building and overhauling continued slowly from exterior points. Late that night, Scott decided it was safe to reenter. Kacl's body was recovered shortly after midnight. Kacl, 24, was survived by his wife. They were expecting their first child in several months.

Hough continued to insist upon working despite severe headaches and several paralytic seizures, including one in the dormitory at Fire Station 66. Hough was taken to Central Receiving Hospital and seemed to be recovering as he sat up in bed while visiting with Blake at noontime, December 12. Hough was talking to Blake when he suddenly collapsed, slipped out of bed and fell onto the floor. Rescue 23 was called and worked on him until 7:40 p.m., when he was pronounced dead. Hough, 36, was survived by his wife.

Firefighters recalled that Hough was the First Honor Medal winner to die in the line of duty. On December 20, 1920,

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Firefighter Joseph W. Kacl
Truck 3
Died of injuries suffered in
burning building floor collapse
November 6, 1939

As the Gray Building fire worsened, additional companies att
from the rear alley, including Water Tower Truck Compan

FROM THE COLLECTION OF GEORGE M. GARNER

Hough was assigned to Engine 17 when he learned that a worker fumigating the nearby Albers Brothers Milling Company had collapsed inside the cyanide-filled building. Hough ran to the mill, climbed a fire escape, kicked in a window, went inside and carried out the unconscious worker who survived. Hough was awarded the honor medal and his name was added to the growing list on the headquarters roll of merit.

The $133,000 Gray Building fire resulted in a question which would be debated for years. Did the three Manifold-Duplex Systems and the water tower, together with the other streams, overload the fire-weakened floors with water, thus leading to the collapses and the deaths of two firefighters? The personal loss that all fire chiefs feel when members under their command are killed in the line of duty weighed heavily upon Scott. Fresh in his thoughts, too, was the job scandal taint that befell the department during five of the 21 years he was chief engineer.

The tragedy was that Scott undoubtedly felt that those few years tended to overshadow the endless list of accomplishments during his 35 years as a member of the LAFD. He undoubtedly wondered whether he should have exerted greater efforts — and sooner — toward ending the job racket before it became a cancer which was only removed by Shaw's recall and the resulting trial. Nor were Scott's spirits raised when he learned that Mayor Bowron would, on March 2, finally make public the results of Stevens' investigation and recommendations which Scott had earlier read. Scott also knew that Bowron preferred to see his friend, Alderson, become chief engineer.

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Auto Fireman John C. Hough
Engine 3
Died of injuries suffered at commercial building fire
December 12, 1939

With three Manifold-Duplex companies, Water Tower Truck 24 and other companies deluging the Gray Building with water, upper floors suddenly collapsed. Firefighter Joseph W. Kacl of Truck 3, who was holding the nozzle (upper left) was killed. During attempts to reach Kacl, another collapse occurred. Auto Fireman John C. Hough of Engine 3 was struck in the head by debris and died later.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF BARNEY WEBER

Scott pragmatically realized he had accomplished all he ever would for the department to which he had dedicated more than half his life. On February 28, 1940, Scott announced he was resigning and would take his pension, effective April 1. With accrued vacation time due him, Scott left office on the day of his announcement. Blake said he, too, would retire at the same time as Scott.

The fire commission asked Scott to suggest an interim successor. He proposed Assistant Chiefs Wesley H. Augustine and Herbert Krumsiek, brother of Capt. Lawrence Krumsiek, who was fatally burned in the 1935 flash fire at the waterproofing company. The commission named Krumsiek acting deputy chief until the civil service procedures came up with a list of three candidates from which the commission would choose the new chief engineer.

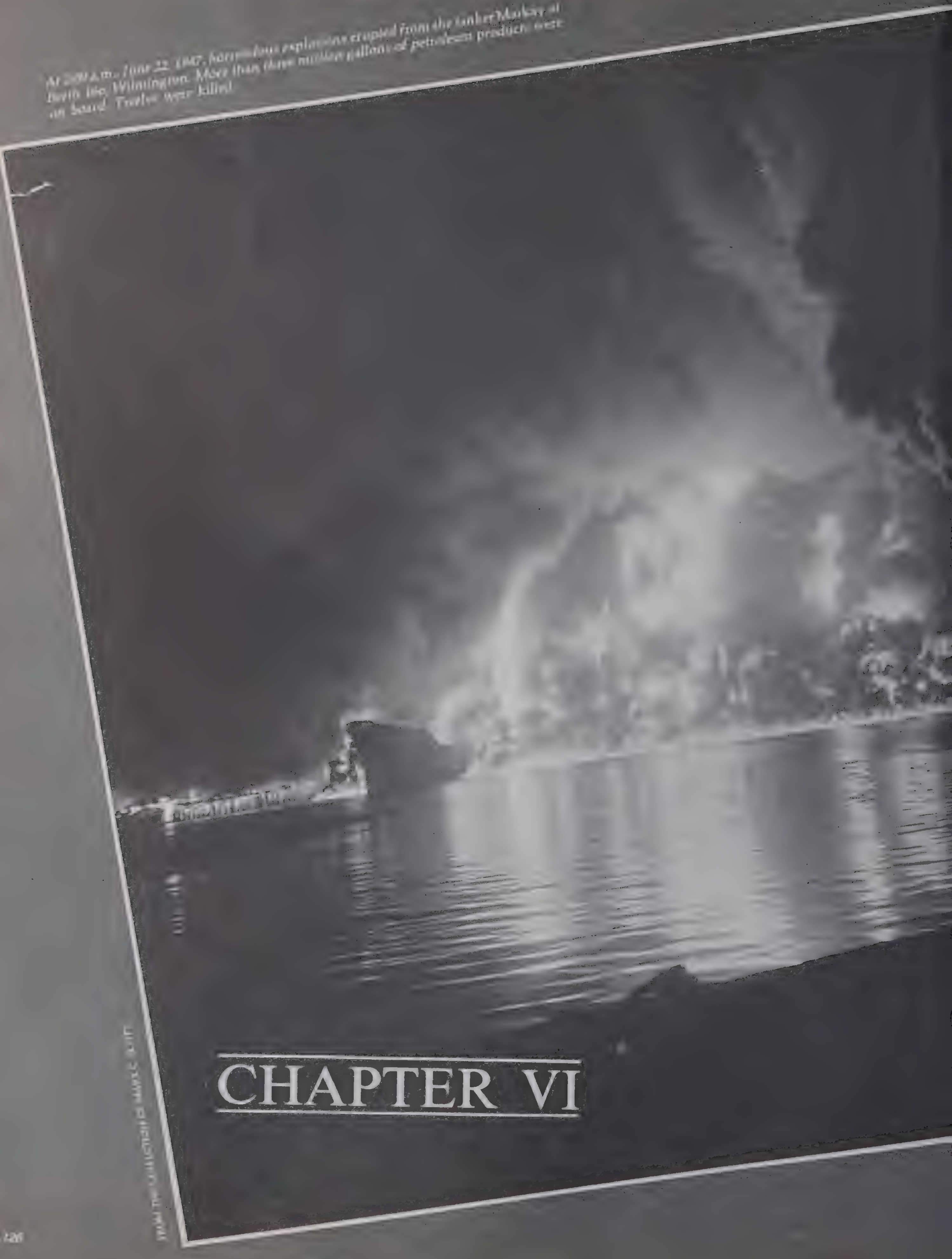
On the date his retirement became effective, Scott assumed the managing directorship of the International Association of Fire Chiefs, then in New York City. The position was not to his liking and he resigned seven months later. For the remainder of his life, Scott and his wife lived quietly in Los Angeles and at their vacation home at Williams Lake, British Columbia.

Shortly before his death, Scott was seriously injured while chopping firewood at Williams Lake. A pile of logs collapsed and rolled over his legs. On September 17, 1958, Scott died of a heart attack at his summer home while vacationing with his wife, Mrs. Adeline Haas Scott, the only wife of a chief engineer who lived in a firehouse apartment with her husband. Scott was 74.

While history compels the notation that the worst political scandal in Los Angeles' history severely-impacted the LAFD during Scott's administration, history even more compellingly requires the recognition that Scott, more than any other chief engineer before him, left a legacy of professionalism that would be perpetuated in the LAFD and inspire departments the world over to look to Los Angeles for new ideas, innovations and techniques in fire protection, fire prevention and public education in fire safety.

When Scott became chief, the department was largely a follower of the tried-and-true methods and traditions of other departments. When he left office, the LAFD was forever after and, under every chief engineer who followed him, the acknowledged symbol of excellence and leadership in the fire service.

At 2:00 a.m., June 22, 1947, horrendous explosions erupted from the tanker Markay at Berth 167, Wilmington. More than three million gallons of petroleum products were on board. Twelve were killed.



FROM THE COLLECTION OF [illegible]

CHAPTER VI

THE RIGHT MAN AT THE RIGHT TIME

The fire commission's March 7, 1940, announcement of their appointment of Battalion Chief John H. Alderson, 41, as acting chief engineer was not surprising to anyone in the department or City Hall.

Alderson, a native of Princess Anne, Maryland, had risen unusually fast through LAFD ranks. Joining the department on September 2, 1923, he served only six years as a firefighter when he was promoted to captain, April 1, 1929, and battalion chief, October 16, 1935. As captain he was assigned primarily to downtown stations and, as chief, served in Battalions 5, 4, 7, 9 and 10.

Alderson's temporary appointment put him in the chief engineer's office during the civil service selection process and automatically made him the leading contender to succeed Scott. He was, moreover, a close friend and supporter of Mayor Bowron, largely through Alderson's five consecutive terms as the LAFD's representative to, and chairman of, the executive committee of the politically powerful Police and Fire Protective League (Police Protective League).

Alderson, arguably, was the only possible replacement for the seemingly irreplaceable Scott. As a disciplinarian and an administrator, he was ideally-qualified to restore the public's confidence in the department and to heal the rifts among the members while carrying forward Scott's master planning. It has been said that if Bowron and the fire commission had called central casting and asked them to send someone who closely fit Scott's mold, overview and grasp of fire protection, they would have sent Alderson.

In short, Alderson was the right man in the right place at the right time. When his temporary appointment as chief engineer was announced, Alderson said of his plans for the department that Scott largely built: "There will be nothing sensational, no upsets, just a job to be done. Don't forget that it is a good department and that it is going to stay that way."

A facet of his early life that Alderson was reluctant to discuss were his studies for the ministry at the University of Delaware and his loss of a Rhodes scholarship to Oxford University when he joined the Army at the start of World War I. He served as an infantry sergeant in France. Alderson's reading tastes were wide-ranging. He befriended a young Associated Press and *Los Angeles Daily News* reporter and columnist, who was also a fledging author of books and national magazine articles which were published in ***Fire Engineering*** and the then popular pulp adventure magazines.

At their first meeting, arranged by Jay Stevens of the NBFU and Fred Shepperd, publisher of ***Fire Engineering***, Alderson made a remarkable statement to the reporter who had recently been transferred to Los Angeles from the Associated Press Chicago bureau, where reporters expected cover-ups whenever government officials bungled. "Ours is an open fire department," Alderson told the reporter. "Your responsibility is to sometimes ask difficult, even embarrassing questions about our operations and my administration. My staff or I will tell you the good and the bad, irrespective of the light in which any shortcomings reflect upon the department."

John H. Alderson served as chief engineer from May 20, 1940, until December 29, 1955. The fire commission earlier appointed him acting chief engineer on March 7, 1940, and temporary chief engineer on April 1, 1940.

LAFD PHOTO

Although neither Alderson nor the reporter realized it, the time would come when the writer would have to ask difficult and embarrassing questions. Alderson never reneged on his promise, even during the most tumultuous period in the department's history: integrating black firefighters who were segregated in two fire stations and transferring them throughout the city. The relationship between Alderson and the reporter was indeed a strange one. They never saw each other outside the chief engineer's redwood-paneled headquarters office at 217 South Hill Street.

During their hours of conversation in the chief engineer's office, Alderson discussed departmental affairs, goals and problems "to get an outsider's objective viewpoint," as he explained. The phone seldom, if ever, rang during those hours. The inescapable feeling was that Alderson was isolated within the confines of his office. He surely was a lonely man but not without a sense of humor. Alderson, who often suggested LAFD-related article ideas to the writer, said he read those magazine articles to help put him to sleep at night. Alderson's favorite story, which he shared with rookies, occurred during his own probationary days at Engine 35 when his first fire was a well-involved house. Alderson was assigned to make the hydrant hookup. In his excitement, he connected both ends of the hose to the hydrant.

Shortly after Alderson's assignment to Engine 23 in 1932, he was at his captain's desk when a transient entered the front door and asked if he could leave a bulging burlap bag for a few minutes. Alderson agreed and put the bag under his desk. The transient never returned. Alderson later found the bag was empty and saw several rattlesnakes crawling across the apparatus floor. The transient had apparently captured them and brought the snakes to Los Angeles to sell to medical houses for their venom. Alderson said everyone in the firehouse turned out to search for the rattlesnakes. They were never certain they got all of them. As far as Alderson knew, some of them might still be there.

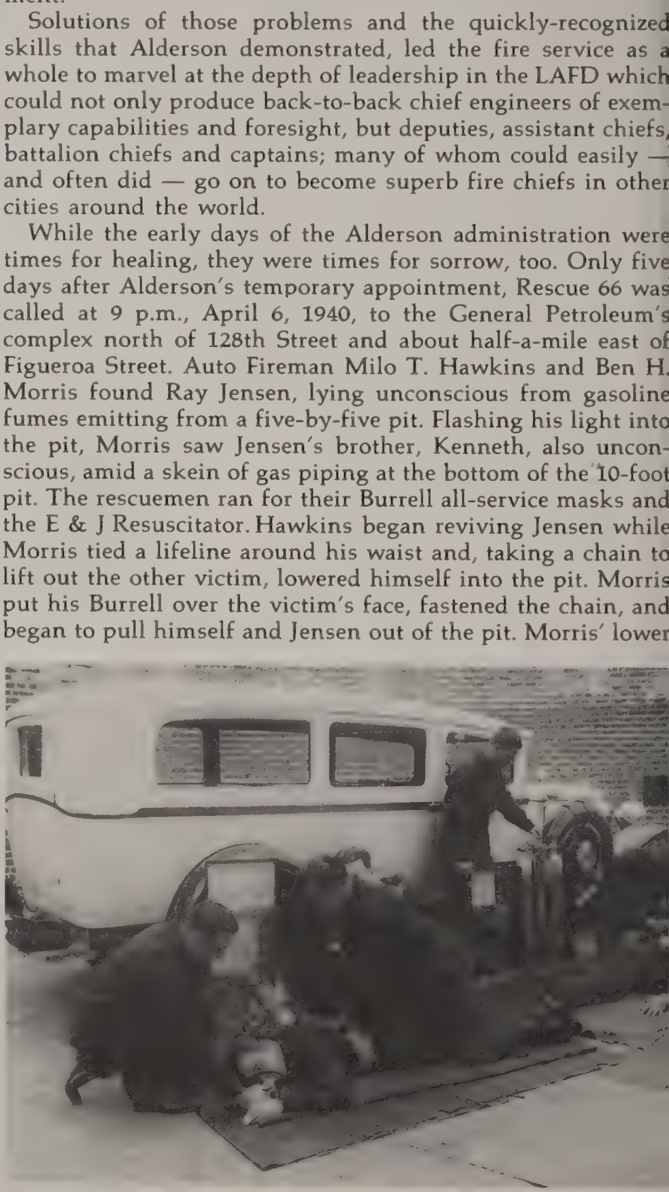
Some 35 years after his first meeting with Alderson, that reporter, Paul Ditzel, undertook to author the history of the LAFD as part of the department's centennial celebration.

Alderson's formal appointment as chief engineer, May 20, 1940, marked the start of an epochal administration which not only carried forward Scott's programs, but gave Alderson opportunities to introduce impressive innovations of his own, or those suggested by firefighters. True to the tradition of Scott, many of these innovations were fire service firsts and were adopted by other departments.

The first challenge Alderson successfully confronted was to restore public confidence and to heal department morale problems lingering from the excesses of the Shaw administration. As strict a disciplinarian as Alderson was, it is historically curious to note that, inexcusable as the payoff abuses were, many of those who openly-admitted to participating in the scandal, went on to prove themselves worthy of advancement to higher ranks through the normal civil service process. That the department was able to solve its internal problems without degrading service to the citizenry was a remarkable achievement.

Solutions of those problems and the quickly-recognized skills that Alderson demonstrated, led the fire service as a whole to marvel at the depth of leadership in the LAFD which could not only produce back-to-back chief engineers of exemplary capabilities and foresight, but deputies, assistant chiefs, battalion chiefs and captains; many of whom could easily — and often did — go on to become superb fire chiefs in other cities around the world.

While the early days of the Alderson administration were times for healing, they were times for sorrow, too. Only five days after Alderson's temporary appointment, Rescue 66 was called at 9 p.m., April 6, 1940, to the General Petroleum's complex north of 128th Street and about half-a-mile east of Figueroa Street. Auto Fireman Milo T. Hawkins and Ben H. Morris found Ray Jensen, lying unconscious from gasoline fumes emitting from a five-by-five pit. Flashing his light into the pit, Morris saw Jensen's brother, Kenneth, also unconscious, amid a skein of gas piping at the bottom of the 10-foot pit. The rescuemen ran for their Burrell all-service masks and the E & J Resuscitator. Hawkins began reviving Jensen while Morris tied a lifeline around his waist and, taking a chain to lift out the other victim, lowered himself into the pit. Morris put his Burrell over the victim's face, fastened the chain, and began to pull himself and Jensen out of the pit. Morris' lower



Rescue Company No. 1 firefighters demonstrate first aid techniques while using E & J Resuscitators.

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

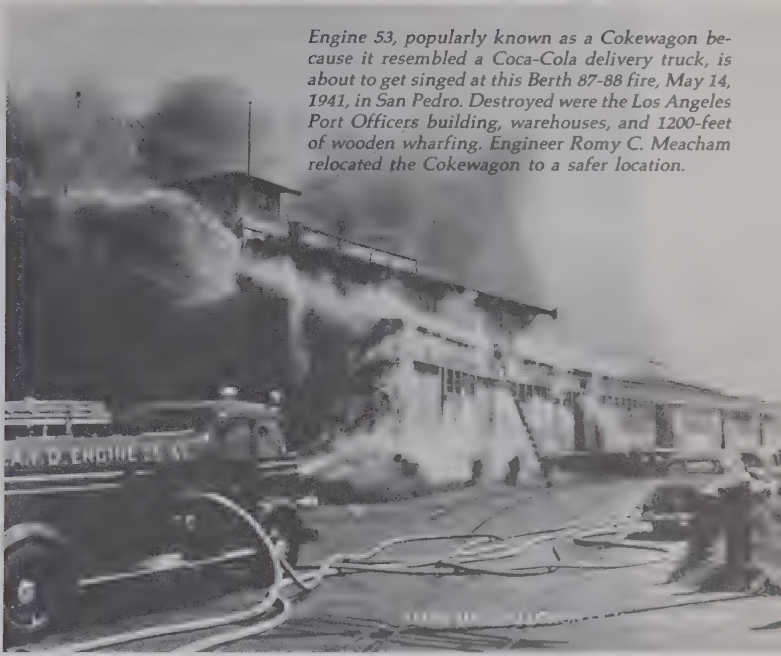
Firefighter Ben H. Morris
Rescue 66
Died in pit rescue attempt
April 6, 1940

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Firefighter Elin Imbs
Engine 46
Died of cardiac arrest at fire
July 2, 1940

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Firefighter Benjamin O. Gause
Truck 39
Died in collision while driving a battalion chief
September 9, 1940


Engine 53, popularly known as a Cokewagon because it resembled a Coca-Cola delivery truck, is about to get singed at this Berth 87-88 fire, May 14, 1941, in San Pedro. Destroyed were the Los Angeles Port Officers building, warehouses, and 1200-feet of wooden wharfing. Engineer Romy C. Meacham relocated the Cokewagon to a safer location.

torso became wedged in the gas piping and he lapsed into unconsciousness. Hawkins went in after him, but was also overcome by fumes.

Workers pulled the two unconscious firefighters and Jensen out of the pit, while another plant employee called Westlake for help. Rescue 23 was dispatched. Hawkins and Ray Jensen were revived and rushed to Central Receiving Hospital. Morris and Kenneth Jensen were pronounced dead of asphyxiation. Among the 32-year-old firefighter's survivors were his parents, who were presented with a posthumous citation of bravery by Alderson. Hawkins received a similar citation and a Medal of Bravery.

On July 2 of that year, Engine 46 was called to a small cafe fire at 4710 South Vermont Avenue. Firefighter Elin Imbs was connecting a supply line to a nearby hydrant when he collapsed and died of a heart attack. Imbs, 60, was survived by his wife and three children.

Less than two months later, at 1:47 p.m., a call on September 9, 1940, to the Van Nuys Signal Office at Fire Station 39 reported a house fire at 20700 Vanowen Street near DeSoto Avenue, at the far west end of the San Fernando Valley. Battalion 10, housed at 39's at that time, covered the entire valley. Battalion Chief Joseph C. Roeder and his driver, Benjamin O. "Tex" Gause, 42, headed north on Van Nuys Boulevard and turned left onto Vanowen. Battalion 10's Buick gathered speed as the firefighters entered the rural-like flatland to the west of Van Nuys.

As they entered the Reseda Boulevard intersection, which was, at that time, virtually all farmland, the firefighters never saw a speeding coupe northbound on Reseda. The coupe slammed into the left front side of the Buick and then rolled end over end several times before stopping in a vacant field. The collision sprung the driver's door. Gause, pitched headfirst into the street, was killed. Roeder suffered severe head and shoulder injuries. The coupe's driver, Dr. Robert V. Carter, was not seriously injured. Gause was the first LAFD firefighter to die in the line of duty in the San Fernando Valley.

Along with a new chief engineer, the department had a new look in apparatus in 1940 with the purchase of its first three rigs jointly built by the Kenworth Motor Truck Corporation and the United Aircraft Company. First to be delivered by United Kenworth was a quadruple-purpose apparatus ideally-suited for the sparsely-protected San Fernando Valley. This closed cab quad, first assigned to Engine 39, provided pump, hose, ladder and water-carrying capabilities. The two other 1940 United Kenworths were 1250-gallon-per-minute triple combination pumpers with closed cabs. They were first assigned to Engines 43 and 53. The body configurations of the United Kenworths led firefighters to give them their popular name, Cokewagons, because they resembled Coca-Cola delivery trucks.

By 1941 it was apparent that in only a matter of months the United States, officially neutral, would be catapulted into World War II which had been raging for two years in Europe. Japan, moreover, was aggressively attacking China and southeast Asia. While the European war was half-a-world away from Los Angeles, its extension to the Pacific would likely bring war to the city's doorstep.

The Alderson administration began planning to cope with aerial firebombing blitzes that had devastated London and other European cities. The LAFD would lose many members to the armed forces and, with routine retirements, significantly reduce manpower resources. That problem had to be factored into planning, too. New apparatus would, moreover, become virtually unobtainable as manufacturers converted to supplying army tanks and other war vehicles.

While worrying about possible firestorms in Los Angeles from air attacks, it seemed incongruous that a baby furniture factory fire resulted in the death of a firefighter. At 1:03 a.m., April 19, 1941, Boxes 4387 and 4388 were pulled in the vicinity of 62nd Street and South St. Andrews Place. The first alarm assignment included Engine 54, along with Engines 31, 46, 66, Truck 66 and Salvage 22. Engine 54 firefighters stretched a two-and-one-half-inch line into the building from the rear loading dock of the heavily-involved Baby Line Furniture Company on Gramercy Place.

Stored paints fueled the fire and forced Engine 54 to back out. Firefighter Tony Arisco tripped over the line and lost his helmet in the smoke. As rolling flames pushed the firefighters out of the building and onto the loading dock, Arisco again tripped over hose in the smoky murk and fell from the four-foot-high loading dock. He hit headfirst on the pavement. A Central Receiving Hospital ambulance arrived as third alarm companies were pulling in and reporting to Deputy Chief

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Firefighter Tony Arisco
Engine 54
Died of injuries at factory fire
May 5, 1941

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Firefighter James C. Slinkard
Engine 8
Died of injuries suffered in fall from apparatus
November 8, 1941

LAFD PHOTO

During the first few months after the outbreak of World War II, the LAFD trained nearly 3000 auxiliary firefighters. While waiting for apparatus from Civil Defense authorities, the auxiliaries borrowed delivery trucks, such as this one from the Golden State Creamery, and outfitted them with LAFD hose, nozzles and fittings.

Rothermel.

Arisco seemed to be recovering at home when his wife discovered him unconscious late in the evening of May 5. Rescue 66 was called, but Arisco was dead. The autopsy showed he died of a concussion and cerebral hemorrhage. Arisco, 48, was also survived by a daughter and a son.

While mourning the loss of the 17-year-veteran firefighter, the department proceeded with preparations for the inevitable war. Los Angeles was a strategic target for enemy attack. The harbor, with its U.S. Navy installations, shipyards and petroleum plants was the prime target. Only slightly less vulnerable was the airport area. The volunteer company at Mines Field (Los Angeles International Airport) was replaced on October 16, 1941, by Fire Station 80 at 5909 Imperial Highway, where a 1918 Seagrave 750-gallon-per-minute pumper was housed. The rented station was located on the south side of the field near several large aircraft assembly plants of North American Aviation which operated its own fire brigade. Harbor fire protection was beefed up by Engine 81 and a fully manned reserve pumper housed on Terminal Island at Fireboat 2.

Less than a month before the United States went to war, the department lost another member. Engine 8, then stationed at 1839 South Hoover Street, was answering a 1:39 p.m., November 8, 1941, call to an overheated refrigerator motor at 1357 South Valencia Street. As Engine 8 was turning from Pico Boulevard onto Valencia, Firefighter James Slinkard, 53, unaccountably fell off the tailboard and died five hours later of a fractured skull. Survivors included his wife, a son and a daughter.

Japan's surprise attack on the United States naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, Sunday, December 7, 1941, resulted in the cancellation of all days off during the first few days of the national crisis. The department's 1706 uniformed members remained on duty while fully manning the department's 90 engines and 22 trucks. While the war was expected, the shock of the Pearl Harbor disaster led to full expectations of an imminent firebombing air raid or invasion of Los Angeles.

Fireboat 2 firefighters stood round-the-clock watches in a hut at the end of their boathouse. From that vantage point they could immediately spot saboteurs and fires. The boat was painted battleship gray to camouflage it from enemy aircraft. That watch continued until the war ended in 1945. The hut was still there as the department entered its centennial year.

Pearl Harbor touched off a national wave of patriotism as thousands enlisted in a war they expected would be over in a matter of weeks. Enlistees included 337 LAFD firefighters. Nine of them died in the service to their country, starting with Firefighter John M. Randall of Engine 11. Staff Sgt. Randall, 26, was killed April 19, 1943, while serving as an Army Air Corps bombardier-navigator during a training flight at Barksdale Field, Louisiana. A member of the LAFD for one year, Randall was survived by his father, three brothers and three sisters.

Anticipating an increase in fires associated with wartime activities, the department developed its first plan to split two-piece engine companies, thus providing an additional 60 pumpers in the event they were needed if Los Angeles experienced aerial fire blitzes. Engine companies made building-by-building inspections in their first-alarm districts while learning of potential hazards in the event of multiple fires as a result of air raids. Immediately implemented, too, was a plan to create an Auxiliary Fire Force from among citizen volunteers.

To train the auxiliaries, Alderson assigned 21 instructors who had recently trained all department members in Red Cross first aid procedures. Nearly 3000 citizens were trained during the first few months of the war. Basic training centers were located in fire stations. Each class of about 40 met two hours every evening for two weeks. The auxiliaries learned to lay hoselines, raise and lower ladders, operate master streams as well as small lines and to administer first aid. Graduates were sworn into the Auxiliary Fire Force and thereafter received advanced training during weekly classes at fire stations.

Alderson's foresight in forming and training the auxiliary corps was not matched by the federal Office of Civil Defense's preparedness in equipping them with apparatus. The auxiliaries set about raising funds to acquire their own. They were as ingenious as they were eager to serve. The auxiliaries put on public demonstrations with paid admissions, promoted midnight shows at theaters and an occasional Auxiliary Firemen's Ball. Corporations and community leaders and service organizations loaned them trucks — 40 of them coming from two local creameries. Citizens donated garages, abandoned gasoline stations, vacant buildings and other structures to house the auxiliaries' trucks which were converted into firefighting apparatus at the LAFD shops. Within weeks, more than 50 auxiliary companies were in service.

Civil Defense authorities finally delivered small fire apparatus which gradually replaced most of the borrowed equipment. The Civil Defense rigs were generally equipped with 500-gallon-per-minute pumps, several hundred feet of hose, lad-

[illegible] of hazardous [illegible] Magnesium [illegible] large streams in [illegible] caused explosions [illegible] windows in a one-block [illegible] alternative meth- [illegible]

FROM THE COLLECTION OF MARX C. SCOTT

ders, extinguishers, fittings and first aid equipment. By war's end, 3149 auxiliary firefighters completed training and 143 companies were in service.

Immediately upon the declaration of war, Alderson assigned Capt. Marx C. Scott to create a plant protection program. Scott and the LAFD personnel under him secured the cooperation of corporate officers who agreed to release their personnel from work while they were trained in all phases of industrial fire protection, including accidents, bombing and personnel safety. Eight hundred brigades were organized and trained.

The Demolition Squad, meanwhile, was put on a wartime footing and received additional training from explosive powder manufacturers. Dynamite Squad officers attended sabotage training classes offered by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the National Board of Fire Underwriters. Off-duty firefighters, meanwhile, voluntarily distributed 600,000 folders to Los Angeles' residents. The pamphlets described how to combat fires started by small incendiary bombs favored by enemy aircraft in raids over non-military, civilian-populated districts.

Early on in the war, the LAFD began air operations for the first time. The idea originated with Capt. George Brown and Firefighter Emile "Frenchie" Plamondon of the Mountain Patrol. With manpower shortages, it was impossible to effectively patrol the expansive tinder-dry brushlands which themselves offered prime targets for enemy planes seeding the hills and mountains with incendiary bombs. With Alderson's enthusiastic approval, Plamondon entered into a lease agreement with the city for the use of his 1941 Taylorcraft BC-12, a 65-horsepower, fixed-wing aircraft.

Plamondon flew the small plane, which had a cruising speed of 80-miles-per-hour, in fire lookout missions over the Santa Monica Mountains and Griffith Park. Later, he purchased a replacement aircraft, an Aeronca L-3. Capt. Robert Schneck, assigned to the Mountain Patrol, was an accomplished artist. He painted a gremlin with a backfiring torch on the side of the plane. Alderson was so impressed with the success of the reconnaissance missions that he flew as an observer on at least one of Plamondon's flights.

The plane operated out of Vail Field in East Los Angeles, but more often from the Burbank and Simi Valley Airports. During his reconnaissance flights, Plamondon spotted a landing site consisting of three connected building pad terraces, each 300-feet-long, between Coldwater Canyon and Beverly Glen Boulevards. Landings were easy. Takeoffs were hazardous. Plamondon went back to using Burbank and Simi Airports. The building terraces can still be seen northeast of Fire Station 99.

LAFD PHOTO

Emile Plamondon of the Mountain Patrol piloted this first aircraft to be used by the LAFD. He flew patrols over the expansive tinder-dry brushlands in his 1941 Taylorcraft BC-12.

The Three Stooges make a deadly serious business humorous while filming this 1936 episode, The False Alarms, *at Fire Station 61.*

FROM THE COLLECTION OF EVELYN R. BRUCE

The reconnaissance flights continued until after the war when LAFD manpower returned to full strength. This use of aircraft was a LAFD-first, but not a fire service first. Airplanes were first used in 1915 by the San Diego Fire Department for aerial fire inspections. In 1917, San Diego's amphibious airplane was equipped with fire extinguishers. Designated Aerial Truck No. 1, the San Diego plane could quickly fly to isolated waterfront fires, land and often extinguish them before they grew larger.

Los Angeles was jittery on the night of February 25, 1942. Two days earlier, a Japanese submarine shelled an oil field near Santa Barbara. At 7:18 p.m., air raid sirens began wailing and an area-wide blackout was ordered as a yellow-alert sounded, preparatory to a red-alert of an actual air raid. The alarm proved false and residents returned to their beds after sirens sounded the all-clear signal at 10:23 p.m. Four hours later, sirens again began howling — a red-alert this time — as Army Western Defense Command radar picked up an unidentified blip 120 miles offshore and heading toward Los Angeles.

The LAFD immediately instituted a recall of all off-duty firefighters, as huge searchlight beams swept the skies and antiaircraft guns opened fire by spouting a torrent of more than 1400 shells. Fireboat 2 Pilot Bill Dahlquist, a member of the LAFD historical committee, was 11-years-old at the time and living with his parents in Long Beach.

Dahlquist recalls that, "We could hear muffled explosions which steadily grew in intensity. My family and I got up and went outside where we saw dozens of powerful searchlights ripping through the clear night sky. Soon we could see the brilliant flashes of light accompanied by puffs of illuminated smoke as rounds of antiaircraft shells filled the sky. At no time did we see any aircraft or hear any bombs. After several minutes of looking, my father ordered us inside the house. No sooner had we taken cover when we clearly heard shrapnel falling all over the neighborhood." At daybreak, Dahlquist found jagged shrapnel, from two to six-inches-long, scattered around his house.

The Navy Department officially said the alarm was false and caused by "jittery nerves." The Army just as vehemently insisted that an unidentified aircraft was heading for Los Angeles. The issue was never resolved, but most believe the blip was a private airplane that wandered into the radar scan area. The LAFD experienced no unusual activity during this 2:25 a.m., to 7:21 a.m., February 26, 1942, scare, but five persons were killed in Los Angeles County during the incident: three in traffic crashes on blacked-out streets and two by heart attacks.

The department reported 67,400 fires during the 1941-to-1945 war years; not nearly as many as anticipated. The explanation is partly testimonial to the effectiveness of Captain Scott's plant protection program, the department's saturation-coverage of the city with fire safety education messages and the unrealized fears of sabotage.

Firefighter Monroe C. Karn of Engine 54 died as a result of one of these wartime fires. His company was first-due at a 11:23 p.m., March 28, 1944, telephone alarm to a large market owned by George Schaeffer at 6700 West Boulevard. Karn and members of his company laid 450 feet of hose while attacking the stubborn fire with greater alarm companies. Engine 54 firefighters suffered severe exposure to ammonia fumes, heat

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Firefighter Monroe C. Karn
Engine 54
Died from exposure to ammonia fumes at market fire
July 21, 1944

nd smoke during the long battle. Karn, ill, went off-duty and ied July 21; probably from complications arising from expoure to the ammonia.

The worst fire of the war years was caused by gross neglience. The results would have made a saboteur proud. The anker, *Fredericksburg,* was loading toluene at the Union Oil erminal, Berth 151. This flammable petroleum by-product vas largely used as an antiknock agent in fuels required for nilitary aircraft. Toluene was leaking from the tanker for at east six hours without being discovered. The harbor current arried the enormous spill floating across the Turning Basin vhere it accumulated around the 200-foot-long wooden dock at erth 223, Terminal Island.

The Navy was using Berth 223's dock to outfit a pair of tubike landing craft which were used during offshore invasions. oored side-by-side, they were being welded and spray-paintd by dozens of Navy and civilian workers, when a spark from welder's torch ignited the toluene vapors. Fire flashed hroughout both landing craft, ate under the wooden wharf nd engulfed the top of the dock, along with a large crane, 25 velders' trucks and workers' automobiles. Sailors and civilians led, or leaped overboard, as the wooden dock-fed flames sent ip billowing clouds of smoke.

A firefighter at Fireboat 2, berthed but a short distance outh, saw the instant inferno and at 1:58 p.m., that Saturday, ctober 21, 1944, pushed the station's long-ring alarm bell vhich sent crewmen rushing aboard Boat 2 and Boat 3. Capt. aurice P. Allen called the San Pedro Signal Office and both oats were casting off as the dispatcher struck the first alarm alling Engine 81 and 40, Rescue 36, Salvage 36 and Acting attalion Chief Homer D. Stewart.

As Fireboat 2 Pilot Brainard "Choppy" Gray wheeled the oat north, Captain Allen saw the enormous body of fire was oing to require the heaviest wallop the boat could deliver. He rdered a four-and-one-half-inch nozzle attached to the boat's ig Bertha turret gun. As Gray brought the boat close to the ire, Big Bertha jetted a 10,200-gallon-per-minute battering am of water.

With only one sweep, Big Bertha knocked down the fires on he landing craft. Gray brought the boat around and Big Bertha nade another sweep: this time extinguishing the flames on the ock, the crane and the burning automobiles and trucks. Big ertha's punch struck a truck broadside and pushed it completely across the dock. Fireboat 2 extinguished the most visible of the flames while incoming companies were still laying hoselines.

Big Bertha did her job extraordinarily well, but Senior Boat Operator Joseph V. "Rocky" Roquemore of Boat 3 was the hero of the day, even before the gun began delivering its knockout punches. Alone aboard Boat 3, Roquemore spotted many sailors and workers flailing in the water around the burning landing craft and dock. Roquemore brought the boat dangerously close to the intense heat, flames and smoke as he tossed all his life preservers to the victims. Roquemore, joined by a dock worker and a shipyard nurse, took aboard a full load of 17 burned workers and sailors in the timespan of only 15 minutes. Roquemore then throttled full speed for the Coast Guard base at Berth 194. After the victims were off-loaded, Roquemore sped back to look for more victims.

With the main body of fire controlled, the slow, agonizingly difficult job of putting out the under-wharf fire began. Assistant Chief Harold N. Johnson of Division 1 arrived at 2:45 p.m., and called for a second alarm which brought Engines 38 and 49 as well as Truck 48. Metropolitan area companies began moving into vacated harbor stations. Soon thereafter, Johnson, sensing the need for more manpower, special-called Engine and Truck 24 from their downtown station at 204 South Hewitt Street.

While Boat 2 operated its rail standee-mounted nozzles near the waterline in attempts to penetrate the fire concealed amid the network of under-wharf supports, firefighters in skiffs and wearing breathing apparatus, tried to reach the hidden spot fires under the docks with small hoselines. On the dock, meanwhile, firefighters labored with axes and jumbo bars to break through the three-inch thick asphalt and four-by-six-inch timber planking over the dock.

Firefighters took a savage beating from the biting smoke created by the burning creosoted timbers as they cut holes in the dock. Cellar nozzles were inserted and lines were charged.

LAFD PHOTO

ig Bertha gun of Fireboat 2 jetted a 10,200-gallon-per-minute battering ram of ater and, with one sweep, knocked down fires aboard two Navy landing craft uring an October 21, 1944, fire at Berth 223, Wilmington.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF PAUL DITZEL

One of the most heroic feats in LAFD history was Senior Boat Operator Joseph V. "Rocky" Roquemore's use of Boat 3 to save 17 workers and Navy personnel following an October 21, 1944, explosion and fire involving Navy landing craft and a Berth 223 dock in Wilmington.

That tactic failed. Johnson ordered Bresnan distributor nozzles which, rapidly spinning by water pressure, formed a powerful circular water sweep under the dock. The Bresnans were ultimately successful in a battle the firefighters did not win until more than seven hours later. Sixteen persons died of burns or drowning: 11 Navy personnel and five civilian workers. More than 35 sailors and workers were hospitalized. Losses exceeded $250,000.

Despite his heroism — one of the most courageous in the history of the department — Roquemore was never officially recognized by a citation or a medal of honor. Alderson's belief — shared by most in the department and undoubtedly Roquemore, too — was that citations and medals were rarely, if ever, given. Roquemore and all the others who did not receive awards during the Alderson era felt they were merely performing the duty they had sworn to do when they became firefighters. Another factor was the war itself. As heroic as LAFD firefighters were on the homefront, even greater heroism was an everyday matter-of-fact along battlefronts.

While medals and citations were not high on his priority list, Alderson's profound interest in fire prevention through education of school children was to become regarded as one of the greatest achievements of his administration. The idea for a LAFD Junior Fire Department had been simmering for two years before it started on February 7, 1944, in fifth and sixth grades at 226 Los Angeles elementary schools. Captain Scott and Inspector William D. Saunders were among the many fire prevention bureau members who brought to fruition and international acclaim, an idea that had been tried and largely failed in other cities.

The story of the formation of the Junior Fire Department began shortly after national Fire Prevention Week in October, 1942, when two fire inspectors polled about 1000 citizens and, as expected, found that few of them knew the purpose of fire prevention week, basic fire prevention, or how to report a fire. The essence of the Junior Fire Department program was that if young people in the formative years, between nine and 12, learned fire safety they would carry it with them into their homes, to their families, relatives and friends and, later, in adulthood.

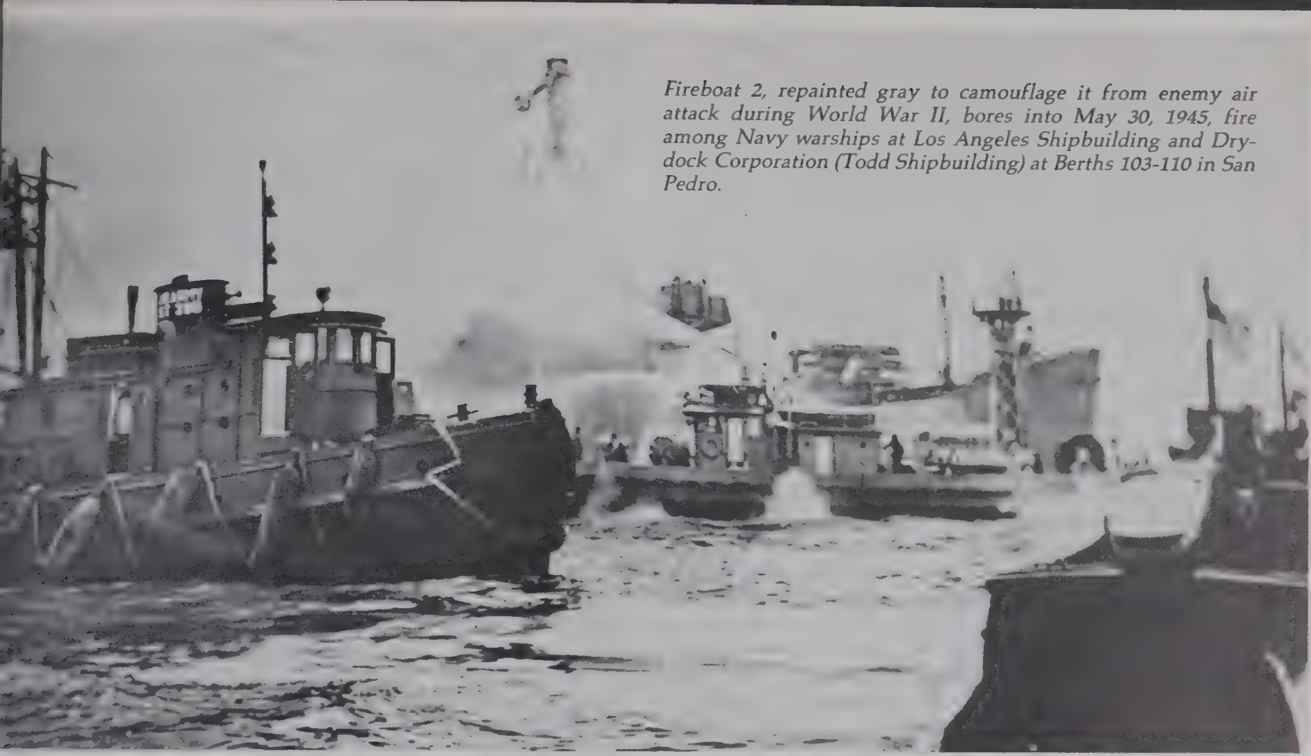
Fire inspectors worked with school curriculum experts developing guidelines, teaching aids and material that studen could take home with them. A student incentive program Junior Fire Department membership cards and certificate inspectors' badges and competitive promotional opportuniti which could lead to lieutenants, captains, battalion chiefs, a sistant chiefs, deputy chiefs and chief engineers badges grad ally developed.

The Junior Fire Department program was jointly sponsore by the LAFD, the Board of Education and the Los Angel Junior Chamber of Commerce, which provided funding wit the support of the Board of Fire Underwriters of the Pacifi Without the Junior Chamber's support, the program migh never have evolved. Douglas Freeman, the Junior Chamber fire prevention committee chairman in 1944 (and who lat became a fire commissioner) secured the seed money. Alderso said of Freeman's efforts, "He contributed more to fire preven tion in Los Angeles than any other man not on the regular fi department."

At the outset of the Junior Fire Department, schoolteache allotted a minimum of 30 minutes of classroom time each wee for fire prevention instruction. During that period, four LAF inspectors visited each school, showed an LAFD-produce film, *Men of Fire,* and discussed fire hazards and prevention a well as how to report a fire. An examination followed the 1 week instructional period. Students who received a 70 per ce grade or better were eligible for membership in the Junior Fi Department. Those who joined were provided with membe ship cards and an official manual developed in cooperatio with Walt Disney Studios which produced 12 fire preventio cartoons for the booklet.

Junior Fire Department inspectors were provided with hom inspection guide cards with checklists of the 12 most commo home fire hazards. The junior inspectors looked for these ha zards in their homes and those of their friends and relative Upon discovering hazards, the inspectors called them to th

Annual picnics, hosted by fire prevention bureau personnel, rewarded top achievers in the Junior Fire Department who were promoted to chiefs. Firefighters and their wives prepared a barbeque for the young chiefs who rode on fire apparatus and competed for prizes in the annual Griffith Park picnics.



Fireboat 2, repainted gray to camouflage it from enemy air attack during World War II, bores into May 30, 1945, fire among Navy warships at Los Angeles Shipbuilding and Drydock Corporation (Todd Shipbuilding) at Berths 103-110 in San Pedro.

tention of their parents or other adults. When the hazards ere corrected, the inspectors had an adult sign a form signify- g the problem had been eliminated.

A junior fireman making five fire hazard corrections was sued an inspector's badge. Promotions to badges of greater thority were based upon the number of fire hazard correc- on points made during the semester. On June 1, 1944, princi- als of participating schools listed their five highest-ranking zard-correctors. From those lists the top five students who d discovered and resolved the most fire problems were varded gold badges by Mayor Bowron.

During the first year, 29,052 students became Junior Fire epartment members and 10,105 of them won inspectors' dges. Junior Fire Department members that year discovered d corrected 96,000 fire hazards. The three leading problems ncovered and corrected by these fire sleuths were topped by ectric cords removed from under carpeting, followed by re- ir or replacement of faulty incinerators and pennies taken om electric fuse boxes and insertion of acceptable fuses.

The success of the program and its eager acceptance by achers and students led to the extension of the Junior Fire Department into parochial and other religious and private schools. Beginning in 1958, the program was extended to ninth graders. By 1960, more than 55,000 students were participating in 2800 Junior Fire Department programs, and a grand total of more than 1,500,000 fire hazards had been discovered and corrected.

During the 28 years the Junior Fire Department was operated, awards luncheons sponsored by the Junior Chamber and picnics supported by that organization, the schools and the LAFD became traditional. Each June, about 600 junior fire battalion chiefs were guests at a Griffith Park picnic where they rode on fire apparatus and competed for prizes in such events as the Roof Choppers Race and the Bucket Brigade.

The program had exactly the effect that Alderson intended. A 14-year-old Los Angeles girl, for example, was babysitting when she discovered a closet fire. Thanks to her junior fire training, she closed the door, took her two sisters to a neighbor's house and called the fire department. Without her training, two or more young persons may have perished in the fire. And not a few junior firefighters went on to become members of the LAFD and other fire departments.

The professionally-orchestrated LAFD Junior Fire Department program was adapted by other departments and achieved worldwide notice when it was featured on a *Voice of America* radio broadcast. The Osaka, Japan, Fire Department thereafter formed a Junior Fire Department patterned after Los Angeles'.

The program was removed from fire prevention bureau operation in July, 1972, by Chief Engineer Hill and assigned to fire stations. Hill claimed the switchover would result in a substantial reduction of operating costs. Money was saved, but the change failed to perpetuate this outstanding program and the LAFD Junior Fire Department soon became only a memory.

By the end of World War II, August 14, 1945, the LAFD's uniformed personnel resources were critically low. Manpower had fallen to 1327. The return from military leave of 324 members helped, but the department would have to hire and train about 700 new firefighters. Much apparatus was badly in need of replacement and new stations had to be built to provide

nong the greatest achievements of Alderson's administration was the cre- on and success of the LAFD Junior Fire Department program, starting bruary 7, 1944. Beginning in 1958, the Program was extended to ninth aders.

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protection to areas which had grown during the war.

From 1945 through 1950, the LAFD put in service 49 new triple combination pumpers (four from Kenworth, 18 from Peter Pirsch, 12 from Mack and 15 from Seagrave). All were rated at 1250-gallons-per-minute at 150 pounds pressure. During the same period, the department bought nine Mack hose wagons, eight of them with high-pressure pumps. Thirteen new aerials also joined the fleet: nine Seagraves (seven of them 85-footers and two of them of 100-foot length) three 85-foot Pirsch trucks and one American LaFrance 100-foot aerial.

Communications similarly improved; largely through the impetus demonstrated by the military value of radio during wartime. The LAFD began operating its own two-way radio system in 1946. First to go on the air was the San Pedro area system, February 6, 1946. The KCJB transmitter at Engine 48 was remotely-controlled from the San Pedro Signal Office. On March 14, 1946, Westlake's radio system, KCJD, began operating from a transmitter atop Fire Station 6, then located at 1279 West Temple Street. San Fernando Valley's KCUG two-way coverage started June 17 of that year with master remote control consoles in the Van Nuys Signal Office at Fire Sation 39, the West Los Angeles Signal Office at Station 59, 1624 Purdue Avenue, and at Mountain Patrol No. 1 where the transmitter was located. The first 51 mobile units which could communicate with each other were installed mainly in chiefs' cars and the fireboats. Some 117 additional mobile units were quickly added to apparatus as the LAFD became the first large fire department in the United States to become fully-radio-equipped.

The prohibitive cost of the fire alarm box system for the San Fernando Valley and other outlying areas of the city, resulted in the phantom box plan. Those areas without boxes were divided into one-square-mile areas and assigned a box number. Assignments of first and greater alarm numbers of apparatus depended upon the hazards inside those mile-square phantom box areas. Phantom boxes had running, or assignment, cards at alarm offices, just as did the traditional fire alarm boxes.

Alderson meanwhile assigned Assistant Chief Harold N. Johnson to study the condition of all stations and their possible replacement, enlargement, new location and the best sites for new firehouses in those areas needing better protection. On May 27, 1947, the electorate approved a $4.6 million fire department improvement bond issue which was used for apparatus purchases and to build 30 new stations; 21 of them replacement houses.

Bond money notably went for new stations in the San Fernando Valley, including Fire Stations 60, 74, 81, 83, 84, 87 and 88. Also built from bond returns was a new headquarters office building adjacent to Fire Station 3. Alderson termed the bond issue improvements "the most important forward step for the department in the past 24 years." The station program started in 1948 and was completed in 1951 with Fire Station 10.

In December, 1947, a team of investigators from the National Board of Fire Underwriters released Report No. 122: the results of a study of Los Angeles they had begun in October, 1946, to reexamine the fastest-growing city in the United States. A major purpose of the study was to measure progress made since the previous board examination of the city in 1935. These studies are used as a basis for fire insurance rate-setting.

Report No. 122 upgraded the LAFD to a Class 1 rating; the first time the department received the highest-possible grade. Fire insurance rates in some parts of the city dropped as much as 50 percent. The report said, in part, "The fire department is well-organized and operates efficiently under progressive officers. Noteworthy improvement has been accomplished and continues to be made in building up manpower, training recruits and new officers and obtaining sites for new fire stations . . . As experience is gained by new members and old equip-

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS/UCLA RESEARCH LIBRARY

With a thunderous roar that was heard as far away as Pasadena, a 9:45 a.m., February 20, 1947, explosion all but obliterated the O'Connor Electroplating Company on Pico Boulevard, east of Stanford Avenue. Fifteen persons were killed and more than 150 injured in the blast which destroyed or damaged 55 structures in a 300-foot radius.

Crater at center of photo provides mute testimony to where a bathtub-sized vat of perchloric acid and acetic anhydride acid overheated and led to the explosion inside the O'Connor Electroplating Company.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF PAUL DITZEL

ment is replaced with new, there is every reason to expect that an even higher order of fire protection and fire prevention will be realized." The LAFD thus became the first major American city fire department in the history of the fire service to achieve Class 1 status.

There are, in the history of every fire department, disasters which create an ongoing mystique of their own. Two of those occurred in Los Angeles within months of each other in 1947 and would rank high on any list of the 10 most memorable disasters in the history of the LAFD: the O'Connor Electroplating Company and the *S.S. Markay* petroleum tanker.

Cleaning, buffing, plating and polishing aluminum products routinely started that Thursday morning, February 20, 1947, at the O'Connor Electroplating Company, 926 East Pico Boulevard, just east of Stanford Avenue. O'Connor's chief chemist, Robert M. Magee, was utilizing a different, faster and cheaper method for electroplating than was commonly used in the industry.

Magee mixed 140 gallons of perchloric acid and 70 gallons of acetic anhydride in a stainless steel, plastic-lined vat about the size of a bathtub. Both chemicals were known to be unstable. The synergistic effect that resulted from mixing them together created a highly-explosive mixture, even with O'Connor's refrigerating system which was supposed to keep the brew below the flash point. Because of the dangers, which had caused explosions elsewhere, the industry shunned the system.

Magee convinced management that this cheaper system was safe, so long as he, personally, did all the electroplating and monitored chemical reactions. Magee and a female assistant were among 16 employees in the one-story brick, 90-by-140-foot building as electroplating proceeded for 90 minutes after the plant opened that morning.

At 9:45 a.m., an explosion obliterated the O'Connor Electroplating Company, left a crater where the vat stood and created bomb-like devastation among 55 structures in a 300-foot radius of the plant. Magee and his assistant vanished. Eight other O'Connor employees were killed, too, as were five persons inside the disaster perimeter, including a youngster riding his bicycle along East 14th Street. A length of blast-propelled pipe vaulted a house and hit him. Destroyed or damaged were seven commercial buildings, five apartment and rooming houses and 43 homes.

The thunderous roar was heard and felt at least as far away as Pasadena. More than one trolley car was derailed by the concussion. A geyser of thick smoke and debris shot hundreds of feet into the air. Retired Firefighter Robert J. Rouleau recalls that the wooden doors of his firehouse, Engine 7, at 328 East 24th Street, shook as if someone was pounding upon them. Rouleau and his fellow firefighters rushed outside and saw the distant smoke cloud. A few minutes later they were sent to the disaster.

While a Westlake dispatcher was taking a call reporting a serious explosion and fire at 12th Street and Central Avenue, far east of the blast site, Box 5313 was pulled at 15th and Hooper Streets, nearly half-a-mile from the O'Connor plant. Battalion 4 Chief William Bennett answered the box alarm along with Manifold-Duplex Engine 9, Engine 14 and Salvage 24. Finding nothing, they were radio-directed to O'Connor's. Even more distant from the explosion was Battalion 1 Chief William Tynan at Fire Station 5, at 525 East Fourth Street. He heard the blast, saw the smoke, radioed Westlake he was responding to the loomup and told dispatchers to call Central Receiving Hospital for plenty of ambulances.

The O'Connor plant was but a few blocks behind Fire Station 30 at 1401 South Central Avenue, where the force of the explosion rocked the building. Engine and Truck 30 left immediately. Falling debris rained upon the apparatus and firefighters as they headed west on 14th Street, immediately behind O'Connor's. Engine 30 Capt. James R. Akers, Jr., ordered his company to turn up Stanford to Pico, where they took a corner hydrant and laid two lines into the fire.

Firefighters and rescue workers dig through debris of O'Connor Electroplating Company in search of blast victims. Ten O'Connor employees were killed as were five other persons inside the disaster perimeter.

Truck 30 firefighters saw persons preparing to leap from the blast-shattered windows of an apartment house on 14th Street. Capt. Archie W. Woodyard ordered his truckmen to raise ladders and the hysterical people, many of them severely cut, were rescued. Countless other victims were buried under rubble or were wandering in shock from their explosion-caused injuries.

Arriving on-scene at 9:50 a.m., Bennett radioed for two trucks and two rescue squads. Westlake sent Trucks 10 and 28 and Rescue 3 and 66. Assistant Chief Ethan B. Wilson pulled in shortly thereafter and called for four additional engines — 7, 10, 5 and 24 — and four trucks — 24, 4, 22 and 3. As these companies approached, Wilson radio-directed two of the engines and two of the trucks to begin rescue and fire attack on Pico Boulevard and the other companies to go to work on 14th Street.

Engine 30 quickly controlled the O'Connor flames while other pumpers supplied firefighters who took lines into houses to attack small fires. Alderson was attending the regular Thursday morning fire commission meeting at headquarters. He heard and felt the explosion, as did the commissioners. They accompanied him to the disaster site where firefighters were frantically digging and pulling apart wreckage to reach groaning victims trapped underneath debris.

Skip loaders, clamshell diggers and the department's heavy wrecker were called to help pull away the tons of jumbled bricks, wood, concrete and chunks of buildings, while a duck, covered with explosion dust, waddled aimlessly over the pile of rubble.

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS/UCLA RESEARCH LIBRARY

At 8:17 a.m., May 16, 1945, firefighters answered an alarm from the nine-story unsprinklered Bekins Van and Storage Warehouse, 3625 South Grand Avenue. As severe as the fire appeared from the outside, the smoke and heat bottled up inside were among the worst ever encountered by the LAFD. Assistant Chief Wesley H. Augustine said that never in his 36 years on the job had he seen firefighters endure more heat and smoke punishment while stubbornly mounting an interior attack. Thirty firefighters were injured, including 12 who were hospitalized. Injuries ranged from smoke inhalation to severely inflamed eyes.

The O'Connor disaster, which killed 15 and injured more than 150 people, for the first time demonstrated the speed and versatility of the LAFD's new radio system during a major emergency. An examination of the Westlake dispatcher's report shows that in only nine minutes after the first alarm and despite the conflicting and widely-scattered reports of the location of the disaster, the exact amount and type of apparatus that would be required was either at, or on the way, to O'Connor's.

The catastrophe taught the department how effectively radio could be used to direct incoming companies to where they were most needed. Without radio, the command officers would have required a far greater length of time to call for additional resources by using traditional handsets or telegraph keys at alarm boxes or telephones. Never again would radio be considered a supplemental tool at fireground operations. Radio became an indispensable tool.

The O'Connor disaster resulted in another LAFD first as the fire service entered the age of dangerous chemicals. The fire prevention bureau immediately prepared an ordinance stipulating regulations for the storage, transportation, production, processing and use of hazardous materials. The City Council passed the ordinance which Mayor Bowron signed, effective April 9, 1947. The law empowered the fire commission and the chief engineer to adopt rules and regulations covering all phases of the chemical industry in Los Angeles.

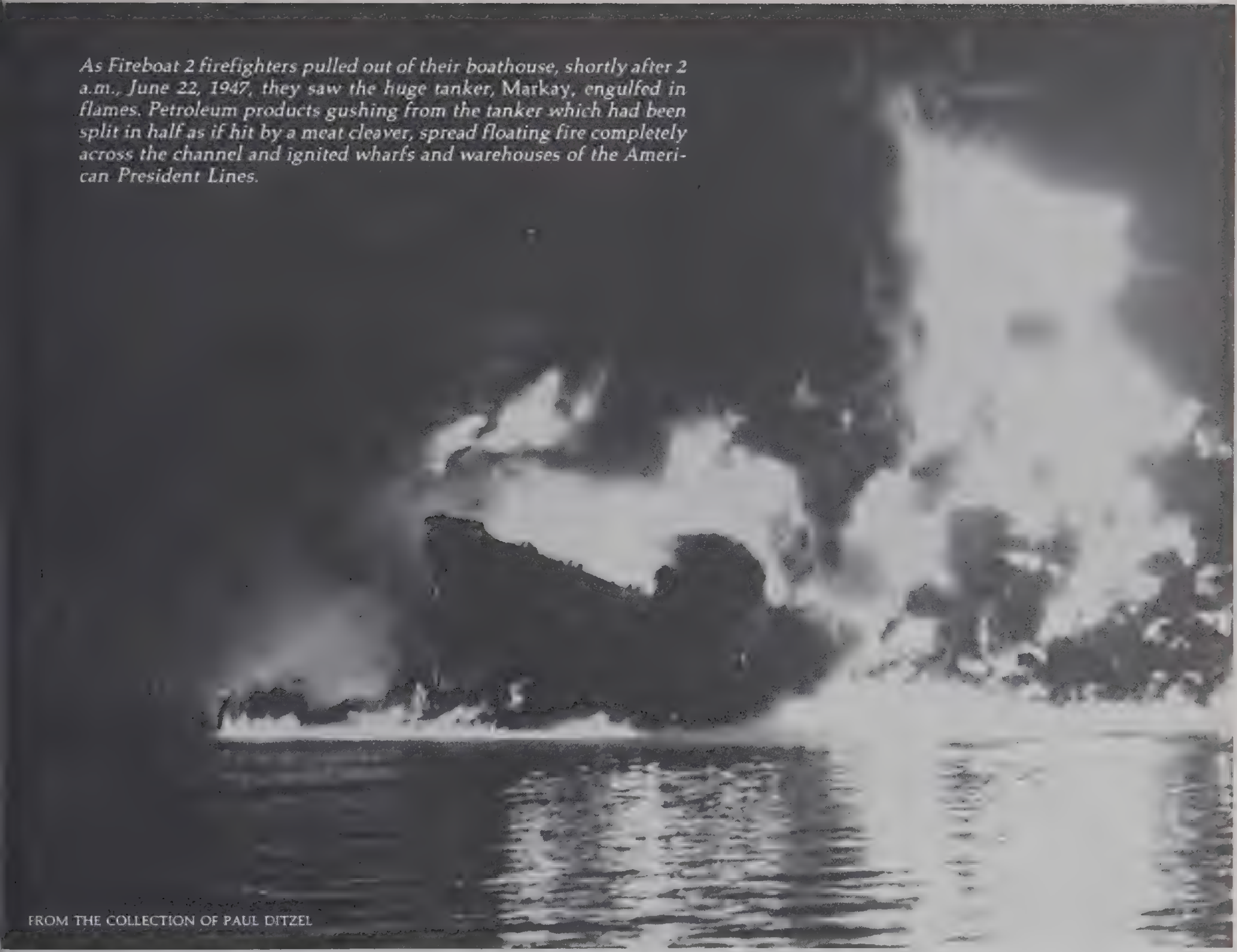
Capt. Charles W. Bahme was named head of the new dangerous chemical detail in the fire prevention bureau. The detail compiled a list of about 4000 hazardous substances and inspected around 2000 city occupancies where they were most often utilized. Their work led to the LAFD's first ***Dangerous Chemical Dictionary*** in 1949 and on April 5, 1951, the fire commission formally adopted the first Dangerous Chemicals Code Regulations. Bahme, who was later promoted to deputy chief, became one of the fire service's foremost authorities on hazardous materials.

As Bahme began his pioneering investigations into dangerous chemicals as they related to the fire service, explosions of ammonium nitrate which had been loaded aboard the *S.S. Grandcamp* on the Texas City, Texas, waterfront, April 16, 1947, touched off massive fires and other explosions while devastating industrial plants and residences in that petrochemical port. Killed were 561 people, including all 27 members of the Texas City Volunteer Fire Department. Losses exceeded $50 million. It was the worst industrial catastrophe in the history of the United States.

On the morning of the explosion, Alderson sent Assistant Chief Henry R. Boone, commander of the fire prevention bureau, Battalion Chief Harry Gross, in charge of training and Capt. Claude A. Conlin, Jr., head of the photo and publicity unit, to Texas City to see, learn and photograph what happened. Writing in the May, 1947, ***The Firemen's Grapevine,*** Gross prophetically said, "We must all think and prepare for these things. Can it happen here? It did happen in Texas City."

Gross' question was emphatically answered within weeks. The 10,000 ton *S.S. Markay,* one of the largest tankers in Pacific Coast service, was loading butane blend at the Shell Oil Terminal, Berth 166, on Mormon Island, Wilmington. More than three million gallons of other petroleum products were sloshing among the *Markay's* nine tank compartments; only two of which were empty but nevertheless filled with flammable vapors.

At 2:09 a.m., June 22, 1947, horrendous explosions unexplainably erupted from the midship butane compartments. Great gobs of flame and ugly black smoke boiled hundreds of feet into the sky and cast a shimmering glow over the channel waters. Like hacks from a gigantic meat cleaver, the blasts split the *Markay* down to her keel and released hundreds of thousands of gallons of petroleum products which spread out across the slip toward the row of American President Lines' one-story warehouses, each of them 600-feet-long and stand-



As Fireboat 2 firefighters pulled out of their boathouse, shortly after 2 a.m., June 22, 1947, they saw the huge tanker, Markay, engulfed in flames. Petroleum products gushing from the tanker which had been split in half as if hit by a meat cleaver, spread floating fire completely across the channel and ignited wharfs and warehouses of the American President Lines.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF PAUL DITZEL

ing on a wooden wharf.

The thunderclap explosions and concussions shattered windows and triggered burglar alarms throughout Wilmington, San Pedro and Terminal Island areas. A huge, hot chunk of the *Markay's* deckwork plopped down in the backyard of a San Pedro house. Telephone calls and box alarms were coming in faster than the San Pedro Signal Office could handle them. First to hit was Box 15 at Berth 90. A mile of open water separated the box from the *Markay.* (Box 15 was the name adopted by Los Angeles area fire buffs when they organized their club.)

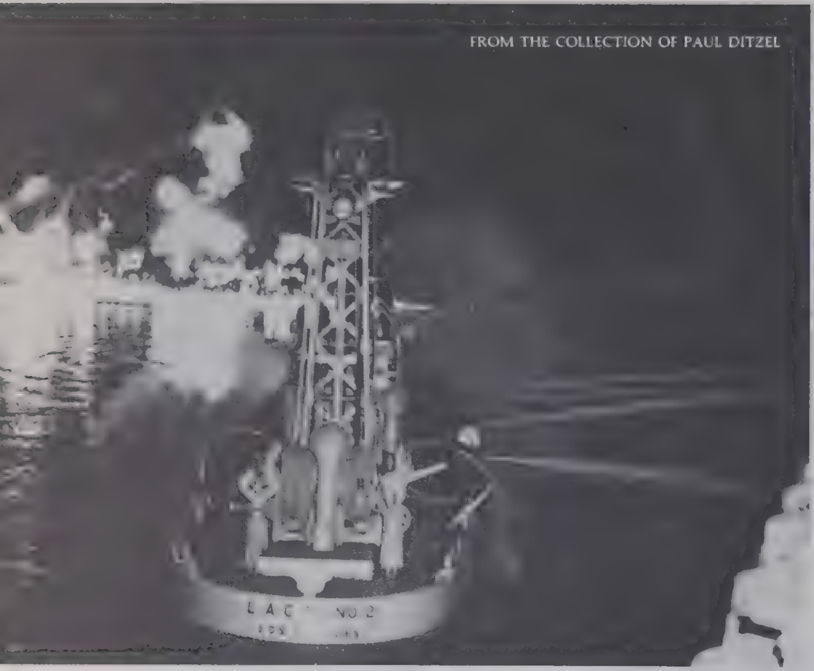
Fireboat 2's barn-like house and the fire station adjoining it rocked on its pilings as if an earthquake had struck. The dormitory lit up with an orangish-glow. Acting Capt. Jack Gordon grabbed the firephone and told the signal office that Boats 2 and 3 were casting off and heading toward Mormon Island. The 15 fireboat firefighters could not see the fire, but they knew it was big, it was behind them and it was somewhere around Mormon Island.

Brainard "Choppy" Gray started Fireboat 2's gasoline-powered engines and the crew cast off while First Mate John Planagan followed in the smaller Fireboat 3. As the firefighters left the boathouse, they saw for the first time that they were in for the fight of their careers. Except for its bow, the *Markay* was almost completely engulfed in clouds of flame and smoke. Turning north for the short run up the channel to the *Markay,* they felt the intense heat while they were still hundreds of yards distant.

Blazing petroleum products from the slashed *Markay* spread a blanket of flames completely across the 600-foot-wide Slip No. 1. The floating sea of fire fanned out under wood pilings and wharfing that supported the American President Lines' warehouses. The explosions had snapped the warehouses' sprinkler piping. As the fireboat firefighters plowed closer they saw wisps of smoke turn black and they knew that at least two of the warehouses were as beyond saving as was the *Markay.*

With flames completely blocking the channel and the *Markay* blazing furiously on their starboard side and the warehouses burning on their port side, the firefighters realized a worse threat. The offshore breeze and tide were pushing the flames upstream toward a congested area of oil storage tank farms, warehouses, a chemical plant, an oil refinery and the huge complex of the "20 Mule Team" United States Borax & Chemical Corporation. Beyond those industries lay tens of thousands of Wilmington homes.

The San Pedro Signal Office dispatchers, meanwhile, sent Engines 36 and 53, Truck 48, Salvage 36, Rescue 36 and Boat Tender 36, a hose carrier. Acting Battalion 6 Chief Russell Biegel quickly radioed, "Dispatch every piece of apparatus in the battalion." Biegel also requested more companies from elsewhere in the city to the north. It was a long run for all of these companies and the small force of Battalion 6 firefighters would have more than they could handle, even after help arrived. Alderson was notified and immediately left for Wilmington.


FROM THE COLLECTION OF PAUL DITZEL

With the blazing Tankship Markay *blazing on its port side, Fireboat 2 attacks flames which floated across the harbor slip and fanned out under wood pilings and wharfing supporting two American President Lines' warehouses. Both the wharves and the warehouses were destroyed.*

Acting Division 1 Chief Floyd Adams, responding from his Fire Station 66 quarters, later recalled, "I was a good 18 miles away from the harbor. The panoramic glow of that fire reminded me of color photos I had seen of the London Blitz during World War II."

While land companies on both sides of the channel were mounting a direct, heavy stream attack on the warehouses and protecting nearby petroleum storage tanks, Fireboat 2 was the key to stopping this fire from extending upstream and touching off a conflagration in Wilmington. Somehow, the fireboat firefighters had to battle their way through that smoke-shrouded sea of flame, get to the other side of it, turn the boat around and batter the fire head-on with all guns and rail-mounted nozzles attacking the heavily-involved underwharf fire.

Boat 2 churned to within 500 feet of the *Markay* and the warehouses. The roaring flames all but overwhelmed the deafening rumbling of the fireboat's engines. The intensity of the heat and the likelihood of more explosions made further going an almost certain suicide run. Gray signaled the engine room to slow all engines. Boat 2 glided forward as firefighters opened valves which sent cooling jets of water spraying the wheelhouse. The heat nevertheless shattered three windows and the starboard lights.

Gray held the wheel steady as Boat 2 edged closer. Huge heat blisters puffed up along the boat's gray hull. Sensing the peril, Gray rang for full speed astern, while the firefighters looked for another way to plow into the fire. Alone aboard Fireboat 3, Planagan spotted four *Markay* crewmen dive off the stern. Throttling to full speed, Planagan swooped his launch into the inferno and picked up two of the crewmen, as heat melted the boat's windshield. The two other crewmen disappeared and Planagan sped to shore with the badly-burned men who would survive.

Boat 2 firefighters tried another tactic to penetrate the impenetrable. Nosing in close to the burning warehouses and staying as far distant as possible from the *Markay,* Boat 2 opened up with all its guns. Inch-by-inch, yard-by-yard, Boat 2 slowly moved closer to the 600,000 square-foot expanse of flames burning on top of the water. Dead ahead was a 1200-foot-long patch of floating flame completely blocking the channel. Much of it was shrouded in thick, choking, biting stinging creosote smoke.

With visibility nearly zero, there were other risks to consider before entering that furnace. Stray vapors from the boat's gasoline engines could ignite and blow the boat and all aboard to bits. Gray had the added problem of avoiding floating debris or, becoming disoriented in the smoke, smashing into the wharf itself. As all these possibilities flashed through the fireboat firefighters' thoughts, they knew there was no time to debate them. Fireboat 2 had to bull its way through that blazing, smoking hell, if a worse disaster and more loss of life than the crewmen of the *Markay,* was to be averted.

The roaring flames and the churning engines made radio orders from shore all but impossible to understand. Gray turned the radio to full volume and heard Alderson's order to plow in through and make a frontal attack, which was exactly what Boat 2 firefighters were planning to do. "That order was the most difficult one I had to give in all my years as chief," Alderson later recalled. "I knew that I could be sending those men to their deaths."

Gray rang for propulsion and Boat 2 churned into the maelstrom. No go. Smoke swallowed the boat and swept into the wheelhouse. Gray could not see the compass. He ordered all engines reversed. The first attempt had failed. Then the smoke momentarily lifted. Boat 2 firefighters seized their opportunity to attack. Gray rang for full speed ahead and the boat stabbed into that wilderness of smoke and flame.

Boat 2 firefighters — none of them wearing breathing apparatus, because they had none — took a vicious smoke and heat beating as they pointed their guns downward while sweeping aside the floating flames. They shot into the swirling smoke and fire which closed in behind them and shrouded the boat. It seemed like an eternity as they held their breaths while gritting their way through that 1200-foot-long caldron. Boat 2 suddenly burst into clear water. The smoke and fire was behind them.

Gray quickly brought the boat around. With all guns, rail nozzles and the Big Bertha pounding away, the fireboat firefighters attacked the advancing flames head-on and fought them to a standstill. The fire would extend no further. The land and water battle continued for days as the *Markay* and the

Despite the awesome heat from the blazing Markay, *firefighters mount a vigorous attack in the Shell Oil Terminal complex, Berth 166, Wilmington, where the* Markay *was docked while loading more than three million gallons of petroleum products at the time of the explosion.*

wharves continued to smoke. Ten bodies were found. Two more never were. Losses came to $5,037,500. Boat 2 and 3 firefighters earned everlasting fame that night for an act of courage and firefighting unparalleled in the 100-year-history of the LAFD. But not one medal for bravery was ever awarded to any of them.

Later that year, the department lost a member through an act of vandalism. Engine 16 was returning to its 139 North Hope Street station from an alarm on the evening of November 12, 1947. Auto Fireman Everett H. Young, 37, was at the wheel of the engine while southbound on the Arroyo Seco Parkway (Pasadena Freeway) near Solano Avenue. A cascade of rocks and bottles suddenly pelted the engine from a 50-foot hill overlooking the parkway. A large rock pierced the windshield and struck Young in the head, killing him instantly. Capt. James J. McCluskey grabbed the wheel and stopped the engine before it crashed. Young was survived by a wife and two children.

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Auto Fireman Everett H. Young
Engine 16
Died of injuries suffered when rock was thrown at apparatus
November 12, 1947

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Firefighter Hugh Travers
Salvage 28
Died of burns suffered in furniture store fire flashover
November 23, 1947

Only 11 days later, Firefighter Hugh Travers, 32, of Salvage 28 was killed during an early morning fire, November 23, at the Harold Furniture Company, 1315 Wilshire Boulevard. The fire, which caused $50,000 damage, seemed to be under control when a sudden flashover caught Travers while he was just inside the front door. Two other members of Salvage 28, Harold V. Asher and Jack L. Hudson, were seriously burned.

On Christmas morning, 1947, Alderson, his wife and family were opening presents in their home at 1617 South Spaulding Avenue, when the chief engineer smelled smoke and discovered his attic was burning. Alderson picked up his direct firephone to Westlake and sent in the alarm. First-due Engine 68 laid a one-and-one-half-inch line through the front door. Alderson, in his bathrobe, was, to say the least, an interested observer, until a firefighter who did not recognize him, ordered the chief engineer out of his home.

"I quickly recognized the hand of authority, obeyed the fireman's orders and retired to the backyard," Alderson wrote in the January, 1949, ***The Firemen's Grapevine.*** From there he watched as flames destroyed most of the wood roof of his home. In a preface to the article, Alderson tongue-in-cheek said he was writing "My Home Burns!" as "an effort to save my time and yours. I realize that for the next six months in every fire station which I enter, someone will either ask or want to ask what happened Christmas. The answer is very simple. Yes, the Fire Chief had a fire."

Alderson offered this advice "to any other member of the department who contemplates a fire or who thinks that he cannot have one: (1) Do not have it. (2) Check your insurance and if you have not increased it since inflation began, do so at once. (3) If you do have a fire call the fire department and get out of the way and (4) Just grin and bear it when your friends and neighbors begin the ribbing."

Alderson's advice was recalled by his writer-friend who was to author the centennial history of the LAFD, as he, himself, stood in his backyard on a holiday eve — July 3, 1980 — and watched while a similar fire destroyed the roof of his Woodland Hills home, despite the efforts of Capt. Jim Kinninger, the firefighters of Engine 105 and, later, Light Force 105 with the greater alarm companies which followed. Firefighter Bill Martin of Engine 100 suffered a severe ankle injury when he fell from the attic.

One of the best-remembered Hollywood fires did not involve a motion picture studio but was among the most spectacular ever seen in that area. The fire also was the occasion for a

Harold
"It's a great name!"

Firefighter Hugh Travers, 32, of Salvage 28 was killed in a flashover while fighting an early morning fire, November 23, 1947, in the Harold Furniture Company, 1315 Wilshire Boulevard.

LAFD PHOTO

Manifold-Duplex Wagon 27 attacks one of Hollywood's best remembered fires, February 25, 1948, when flames starting in a planing mill spread into the gigantic Lounsberry & Harris Lumber Company. The fire quickly involved other occupancies in the block bordered by Santa Monica Boulevard, Lexington Avenue, Seward Street and Las Palmas Avenue. Santa Ana winds hurled flaming debris which touched off dozens of other fires as far as a mile away.

legendary radio message broadcast by a battalion chief. At 3:24 a.m., February 25, 1948, fierce Santa Ana winds were blowing when Westlake received a telephone report of a fire in the planing mill of the Hollywood Door & Mill Company, 6612 Lexington Avenue, near Seward Street. A minute later, Box 3464, Santa Monica Boulevard and Seward was pulled. Westlake dispatched Engines 82, 27, 51, 52, Truck 27, Salvage 27 and Acting Battalion 5 Chief Harry D. Roberts.

Roberts found the planing mill fire was rapidly extending into the gigantic Lounsberry & Harris Company lumber yard, sheds, finishing mill and delivery truck garage which sprawled from Lexington Avenue to Santa Monica Boulevard. Five minutes after the first alarm, Roberts radioed for two additional engines — 41 and 61 — and Truck 61. Division 2 Assistant Chief Leonard Eggleston answered this call from his nearby Fire Station 27 quarters. Upon arrival, Eggleston called, at 3:34 a.m., for a full fourth alarm assignment.

Flames quickly involved not only the planing mill and lumber yard, but strong winds drove a blizzard of firebrands far to the southwest and set numerous vicinity fires, including a blaze a mile away which burned off the roof of an English-type cottage at 501 North Mansfield Avenue and damaged a home next door to it. The commitment of 13 engines, six trucks, one salvage company and three tank wagons severely depleted departmental resources.

With most of the companies at the fire, which involved about one-third of the city block bordered by Santa Monica and Lexington, and Seward and Las Palmas Avenue, other companies were kept busy rushing to dozens of vicinity fires, including two major ones which caused more than $10,000 damage to the Union Ice Company, 6665 Santa Monica Boulevard, and Vogue Products Company, a cosmetics firm at 1149 North Seward.

Battalion 12 Chief Joseph C. "Wrinkle Neck" Roeder, a feisty firefighter for 35 years, was among those racing from one vicinity fire to another. Arriving at one fire involving a wood roof, Roeder radioed for engine companies. Westlake said they had none to send. Roeder reportedly radioed back, "Then send me some truck companies and we'll beat out the fire with ladders." Total losses exceeded $1 million in the fires which were not controlled until daybreak.

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Firefighter John H. Herbert
Truck 4
Died of suffocation in basement fire
March 20, 1949

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Firefighter Andrew A. Lechert
Engine 73
Died of cardiac arrest at fire
October 26, 1949

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Firefighter Clyde Neff, Jr.
Engine 4
Died of injuries suffered in fall from apparatus
November 2, 1949

The department lost three firefighters in the line of duty during 1949. Truck 4 was among the companies answering a 11:10 a.m. alarm, March 20, from Box 1236, Third and San Pedro Streets, for a basement fire in the Star Distributing & Manufacturing Company at 345 East Third Street. Heavy smoke conditions were found in the electrical manufacturing company basement which was filled with empty packing cases.

Firefighter John H. Herbert of Truck 4, Firefighter Richard G. Roberts of Truck 24 and Auto Fireman Francis J. Kientz of Truck 4 each put on a Gibbs breathing apparatus and took a line down the basement stairs under the direction of Capt. Henry Sawyer of Engine 3. Heat and thick smoke made it impossible to locate the seat of the fire. The firefighters retreated from the murk, backed up the stairway and outside where Herbert was discovered to be missing.

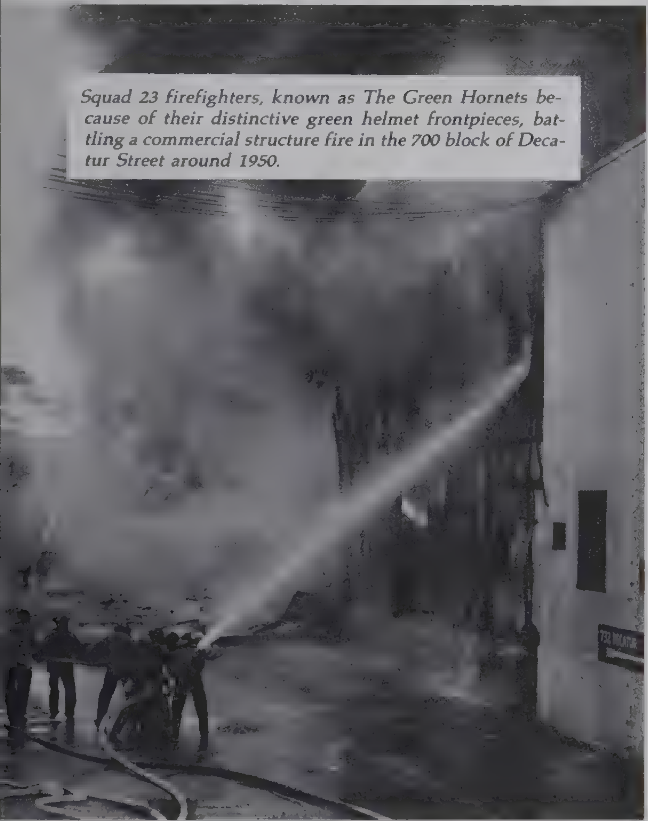
Herbert somehow had become separated from his company nd, disoriented by the thick smoke, could not find the stairway. A rescue team found his body in several feet of water nder the stairway. Alongside him was his Gibbs and his elmet. Herbert, whose death was attributed to asphyxiation, was survived by his wife and two children. Sawyer, Kientz, Roberts and William L. Ingram of Truck 24 were hospitalized t Central Receiving and treated for smoke inhalation and ther injuries.

The second LAFD member to die in the line of duty in the an Fernando Valley was Firefighter Andrew A. Lechert, 49, of ngine 73. The company was called at 3:30 p.m., October 26, 949, to a grass fire in a vacant lot at 18557 Saticoy Street, west f Reseda Boulevard, where firefighters stretched 50 feet of ne-inch booster line. Lechert was pulling hose when he colapsed and died of a heart attack, despite resuscitation efforts y Rescue 39. Survivors included his wife, Dorothy.

One week later, Engine 4 was called, November 2, to a ubbish fire at 300 East Ann Street. Firefighter Clyde Neff, Jr., who had, the previous day, completed his first year on the job, was riding the tailboard. As the engine turned from North Main Street onto Ann, Neff somehow lost his grip and fell rom the apparatus. Neff was rushed to Central Receiving Hospital where he died that night while his wife, Dorothy, was t his bedside.

That year marked the start of one of the department's most llustrious companies, Squad 23, which, reorganized as an extra nanpower unit, went in service at Fire Station 23 on December , 1949. Squad 23's first alarm district included the large central ity area bordered by the Los Angeles River on the north and ast, Washington Boulevard on the south and Alvarado Street n the west. Squad 23 also was special-called to large fires or ther major incidents anywhere in the city.

Each platoon's captain and seven firefighters were provided with breathing apparatus, thus making Squad 23 the first company in the department to carry breathers for all members. Those assigned to Squad 23 wore distinctive green helmet front pieces which led to their name, The Green Hornets, adapted from a popular radio program of that day. Their primary purpose was to get to fires fast and, wearing breathing apparatus, make a quick attack and hopefully knock down fires or make rescues in atmospheres where firefighters without breathing apparatus would find the going dangerously difficult. The squad also carried assorted specialized fire suppression equipment, including forcible entry tools. As soon as the fire was controlled, The Green Hornets were returned to service.


Squad 23 firefighters, known as The Green Hornets because of their distinctive green helmet frontpieces, battling a commercial structure fire in the 700 block of Decatur Street around 1950.

The Green Hornets moved to Fire Station 9 when it opened, November 1, 1960, and became Squad 9. The company was disbanded, June 1, 1966, when the department's first task force consisting of an aerial ladder and three triple combination pumpers went in service at the station. During its nearly 17 years of service, the broad range of experience that firefighters gained as members of The Green Hornets helped win them promotion to higher ranks.

Hollywood area firefighters were called to a greater alarm fire, starting at 11:39 a.m., June 9, 1950, in the Alco Research Corporation. Flames propagating in a rear office of the recording company at 1107 North El Centro Avenue, spread to a storage room containing 250,000 records, mostly of jitterbug music. The blaze then extended up into the Green & Tillisch commercial photography studio. Capt. Michael J. Carter of Manifold-Duplex Engine 27, one of the first companies to arrive, collapsed in front of the fire building. Rescue 27 futilely tried to resuscitate him. Carter had served the LAFD for nearly a quarter of a century.

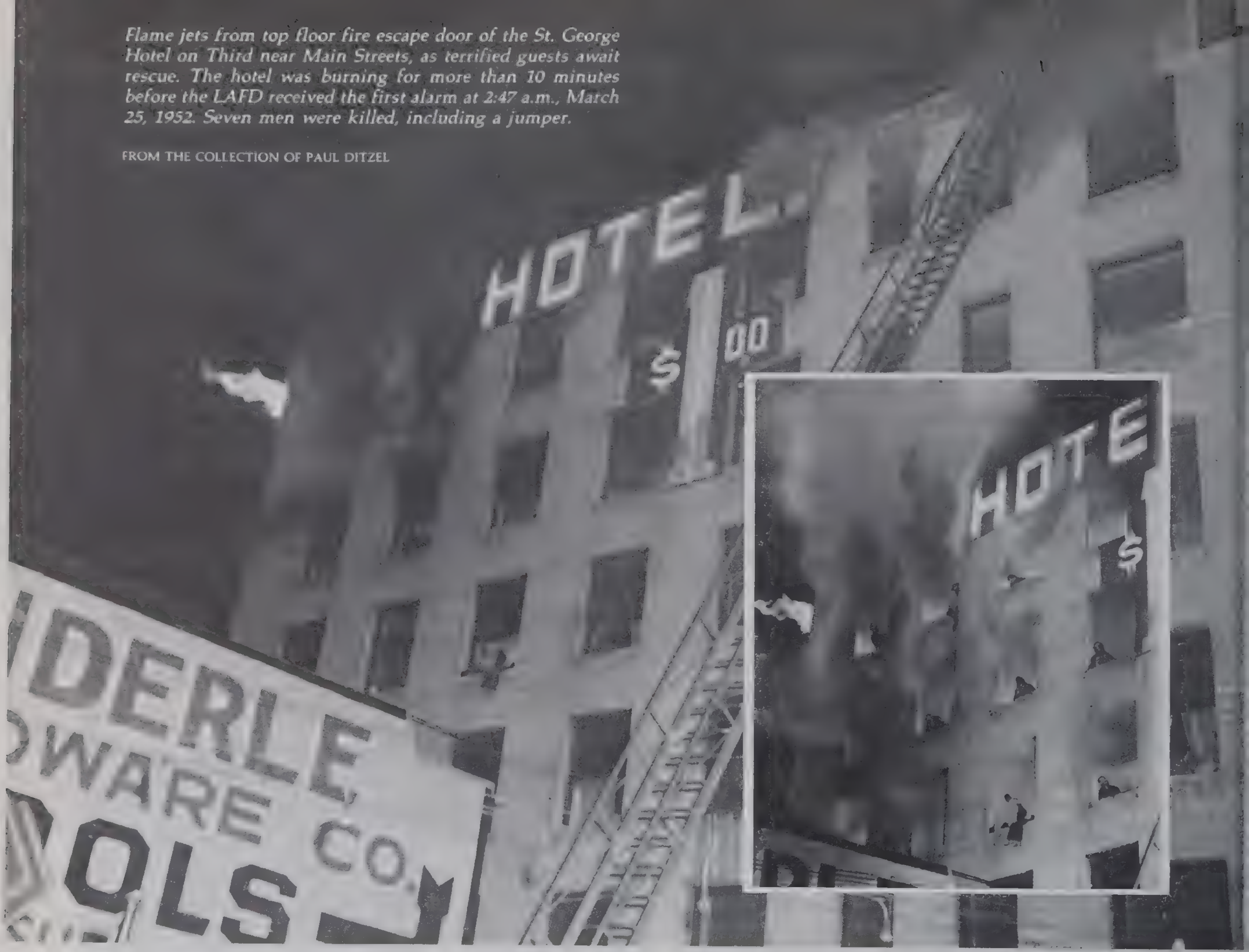
REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Capt. Michael J. Carter
Engine 27
Died of cardiac arrest at fire
June 9, 1950

When the department had, by early 1952, become fully-equipped with 227 mobile two-way radios, Alderson started another LAFD first. The idea of house-to-house fire prevention inspections by individual fire companies had been simmering in Alderson's mind for several years and only needed the completion of the two-way radio system aboard all apparatus.

While companies were making house-to-house inspections in their first alarm districts, the driver remained with the apparatus while listening for radioed alarms. If one was received, the driver called the firefighters by pressing the siren button. Firefighters in dress uniforms made these inspections from 10 a.m., until noon and from 1 p.m., until 3 p.m. During the first year of the program, 225,000 homes were inspected and 50,000 fire hazards were corrected. A major fallout from this extremely successful program was heightened public awareness of fire dangers. The house-to-house inspection program was widely-copied throughout the fire service.

The department's successful home and other fire prevention programs were not matched by its attempts to safeguard hotels and apartment buildings from fire which swept up open stairways, mushroomed along upper floors and often resulted in deaths and injuries. Alderson had, in 1949, proposed an ordinance requiring stairway enclosures. Politically-powerful hotel



Flame jets from top floor fire escape door of the St. George Hotel on Third near Main Streets, as terrified guests await rescue. The hotel was burning for more than 10 minutes before the LAFD received the first alarm at 2:47 a.m., March 25, 1952. Seven men were killed, including a jumper.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF PAUL DITZEL

and apartment owners and associations thwarted him. Councilman Edward J. Davenport said the cost of these enclosures would "throw thousands of apartment house and hotel owners into bankruptcy."

History repeated itself early March 25, 1952, when the Hotel St. George, site of the fire which killed two persons on November 18, 1912, burned again, but with more serious results. Around 2:30 a.m., Night Clerk Leland Whitehouse heard the persistent buzzing of the elevator and saw smoke in the open stairway. The clerk rode the elevator to the third floor where he saw not only smoke, but flames — the worst of them coming from Room 312, where the fire started.

Whitehouse returned to the lobby switchboard and began calling 130 guests. Only after alerting everybody in the building, did Whitehouse take a moment to call the fire department. He estimated the delay in notification at only 12 minutes. Investigators were convinced the lag was much longer.

Whatever the case, Westlake had by then received three telephone calls and a box alarm from near the St. George at 115 East Third Street near Main Street. Westlake time-stamped the alarm at 2:47 a.m., and had apparatus on the way by the time Whitehouse called. It had been a busy night with second-alarm fires at the Bel-Air Country Club in the West Los Angeles area and at Jack's Tuxedo Shop, 330 South Broadway, where firefighters were overhauling ruins when the St. George alarm was received. With apparatus committed to the fires, especially at the downtown tuxedo shop, and moveup companies in downtown stations, Westlake's dispatch was not a normal one.

The first alarm response was Engine 7 (out of 23's) Engine 4 and 24; Trucks 4 and 24, Squad 23 (which only 10 minutes earlier had returned from the Broadway fire) and Acting Battalion 1 Chief Wilbur Bryan from the tuxedo shop blaze. It was but a short run for Squad 23 with Engine 7 close behind.

Turning onto East Third Street, The Green Hornets saw flames spitting from upper-floor windows and jetting out the top floor rear fire escape door. Thick smoke clouded the upper floors of the six-story brick building as hotel guests — most of them $1-a-night transients — were framed in windows and screaming for help. Several were standing on window cornice projections. One of them jumped and was killed.

Squad 23 Capt. Henry Sawyer radioed for two ambulances while his seven firefighters took a line off Engine 7 as that company's captain, Harry E. Hjorth, ordered a 400-foot supply line laid to a Werdin Place hydrant. As recounted by Sawyer in the May, 1952, ***The Firemen's Grapevine,*** "We took a two-and-one-half-inch line by means of an extension, or railroad lay, from Engine 7's pump. I felt that speed was more important than anything at this time. A one-and-one-half-inch line would have been more ideal, but time was the important factor."

Squad 23 stretched 350-feet of hose through the lobby and up the front open stairway to the third floor. "Fire had involved the the hallway and the flames were burning in puffs, much like a huge blowtorch. It had started up the front stairway to the fourth floor. We hit the fire with our line, knocked it down and proceeded to push it back down the hallway to the rear. As we moved down the hallway, part of the crew opened doors while searching for victims," said Sawyer.

"We worked our hoseline back to the end of the third floor hallway. Here we met men from Engine 7 who had come in through the fire escape. They must have taken a terrific beating from the smoke and heat. It was plenty hot in the front part of the hallway — so hot, in fact — that three of our men had the paint blistered on their (green) helmet front pieces. Practically all the rooms were loaded with smoke and heat. Most of the occupants we discovered were panicky, dazed, sick or weak. Several had to be dragged out of rooms and taken downstairs. I have only the highest praise for the members of my company who showed their true colors that morning by taking the initiative and knowing exactly what to do at the right time."

Capt. Clyde Seltzer led his Engine 4 firefighters in direct interior attacks starting on the fourth floor and up to the fifth and sixth floors where they found the chimney-like flue provided by the open stairway had supplied an ideal route for the fire as it ate into the attic. Engine 4, assisted by truckmen, opened up the sixth floor ceiling and stopped the attic fire.

Outside, similarly outstanding feats were occurring. Truck 4 found windows on the west side of the building dotted with terrified hotel guests — most of them screaming and threatening to jump. In the rear, truckmen raised a 35-footer and pulled up a 50-foot Bangor ladder to start rescues. Truck 4's Tony Sciurba maneuvered the 100-foot aerial between wires and lights and spotted the rig in the parking lot to the west of the St. George. Sciurba fully-extended the aerial to reach a sixth-floor resident who got on the ladder. The firefighter swung the aerial away from the building and, to save time and get on with the job of rescues, lowered the aerial to the roof of a hardware store. The man jumped onto the roof and made his way to safety.

Truck 4 Capt. Glenn E. Whately, as proud of his firefighters as Sawyer was of his Green Hornets, said, "Tony picked victims out of those windows like he picked apples." While Truck 4 was making rescue upon rescue, a drunk tried to climb the aerial and was three times pushed back. He said he had valuables in the St. George. Engineer Elvin L. Zimmerman of Engine 7 told him, "We have, too, but ours are breathing."

Investigators found many fire safety violations in the aftermath of the St. George Hotel fires, including this fire escape drop ladder which was tightly wired to make it inoperative. Many of the violations disclosed that the exits were tampered with in such a way as to keep out transients with no money for a $1-a-night bed.

Firefighters and Central Receiving Hospital ambulance crews attend injured who were brought to the lobby of the St. George Hotel.
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS/UCLA RESEARCH LIBRARY

Bryan, meanwhile, had called at 2:55 a.m., for an additional engine and truck and got Engine 16 and Truck 11. Assistant Chief Herbert M. Melvin of Division 3 arrived at 2:57 a.m., and, during the next 12 minutes, called for two more trucks — 28 and 10 — two more engines — 23 and 28 — and Rescue 3. Considering the heavy involvement of the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth floors, where smoke and flames not only traveled along hallways but entered rooms via glass transoms and thin wooden doors, the job firefighters did that night was an exemplary piece of work. With firefighters from only six engines, five trucks and The Green Hornets, dozens of people trapped in their rooms were saved and the fire was quickly controlled. Seven men were killed, one of them the jumper who probably would have been saved had he awaited rescue.

The St. George fire rekindled the open stairway controversy. Investigators produced a laundry list of violations, including a rear fire escape drop ladder so tightly wired that it was inoperative. Rotten interior standpipe hose was found; furniture and other flammables were stored in hallways and on stairway landings. The rear exit door was not only dead-bolted, but a spike had been driven through it to make certain nobody could get in or out of the hotel.

Councilman Davenport accused the department of dereliction of duty. Where were the fire inspectors? Why were they not doing their jobs? Why was Alderson singling out firetrap owners while overlooking some of the city's most exclusive hotels? Alderson's retort: "You are perpetuating a smear on the fire department." The chief engineer reminded city councilmen that their failure to pass a stairway enclosure law in 1949 could have prevented the seven deaths at the St. George.

Davenport continued to insist that if fire inspectors had done their duty, they would have discovered the locked door, the wired fire escape drop ladder, the rotten firehose and the other violations. The councilman was a savvy politician, who knew how to get headlines. But he knew little about fire inspections. Any street-smart inspector could tell him that for every hazard a fire inspector discovers, more can occur, sometimes within minutes, after the inspector leaves. By comparison with the open stairway problem, those violations had little, if any, effect upon the outcome of the fire.

The St. George fire held special interest for Associated Press (AP) reporter Paul Ditzel, who arrived at the hotel shortly after the first alarm. As a former AP reporter in Chicago, he recalled witnessing and writing about the LaSalle Hotel disaster, June 5, 1946, in that city's downtown Loop. Fire and smoke, spreading up open stairways, killed 60 people. The LaSalle was one of the worst hotel fires in American history.

Shortly after the St. George fire, Ditzel joined the ***Los Angeles Daily News*** and, as an investigative reporter, spent weeks traveling at night with the LAFD's hotel detail "Flying Squad" of inspectors who made unannounced visits to hotels and apartment buildings. During that time he interviewed dozens of authorities, councilmen and hotel and apartment house spokesmen.

The resulting series of articles brought out that there were 248 hotels and apartment buildings, among 10,000 such occupancies in the city, which the state officially classified as firetraps because of their vertical, unprotected stairways. The firetrap list included many of the city's best-known hotels. An apartment and hotel owners association spokesman told the reporter that enclosed stairways would create greater hazards because they would "bottle up the flames so the firemen couldn't get to them."

A secret letter from a Sacramento lobbyist sent to the personal attention of individual hotel and apartment owners was leaked to the reporter. It said, in part, "There can be no doubt that the hotels . . . are woefully deficient in protective phases against lost of life." The lobbyist urged hotel and apartment owners to bite the cost-bullet and take corrective action before the City Council forced them to do it.

The ***Daily News*** investigation also brought out that Capt. John E. Cochrane, head of the LAFD's hotel detail, had been offered, but consistently rejected, bribes to quit the department and take a high-salaried job with an apartment and hotel owners' association. Councilman Edward J. Roybal told the reporter that representatives from a powerful real estate lobby had offered to finance half of his next election campaign if he found it "inconvenient" to attend council sessions during the St. George investigation.

Roybal refused and told the ***Daily News*** that he would introduce an ordinance to require stairway enclosures. After the series of articles appeared, Assistant Chief William L. Miller, head of the fire prevention bureau, and Ditzel appeared together on television and radio to state the case for enclosing stairways. Miller's 1954 TV plea for firesafe hotels and apartment buildings is believed to be the first time that a LAFD chief officer used that medium to personally alert the public to the need for better fire safety laws.

Roybal soon thereafter was elected to the United States Congress and the remaining councilmen went on to other matters. The war to make Los Angeles' hotels and apartment building fires continued; the last of them shortly before the LAFD celebrated its 100th anniversary.

The open stairway issue was further backburnered as the department's 56-year-old system of segregated, all-black fire companies began to unravel in 1953, following demands for immediate integration of black firefighters into stations throughout the city. To understand these most difficult years requires an historical preface, starting with the October 2, 1897, hiring of George W. Bright, the first LAFD black firefighter. Shortly thereafter, more blacks were hired and the city's first all-black fire station was formed: Hose Company No. 4 at 137 South Belmont (Loma) Drive.

As more blacks joined the department, the newcomers, along with blacks at Hose 4 were transferred to Fire Station 30 at 1401 South Central Avenue, which became an all-black company on April 16, 1924. Central was a growing area of blacks. The station had an engine and a truck and the many black firefighters crowded aboard the rigs. With still more blacks joining the department, Fire Station 14 at 3401 South Central Avenue became all-black on November 2, 1936. That enabled the department to spread its growing number of blacks among more companies.

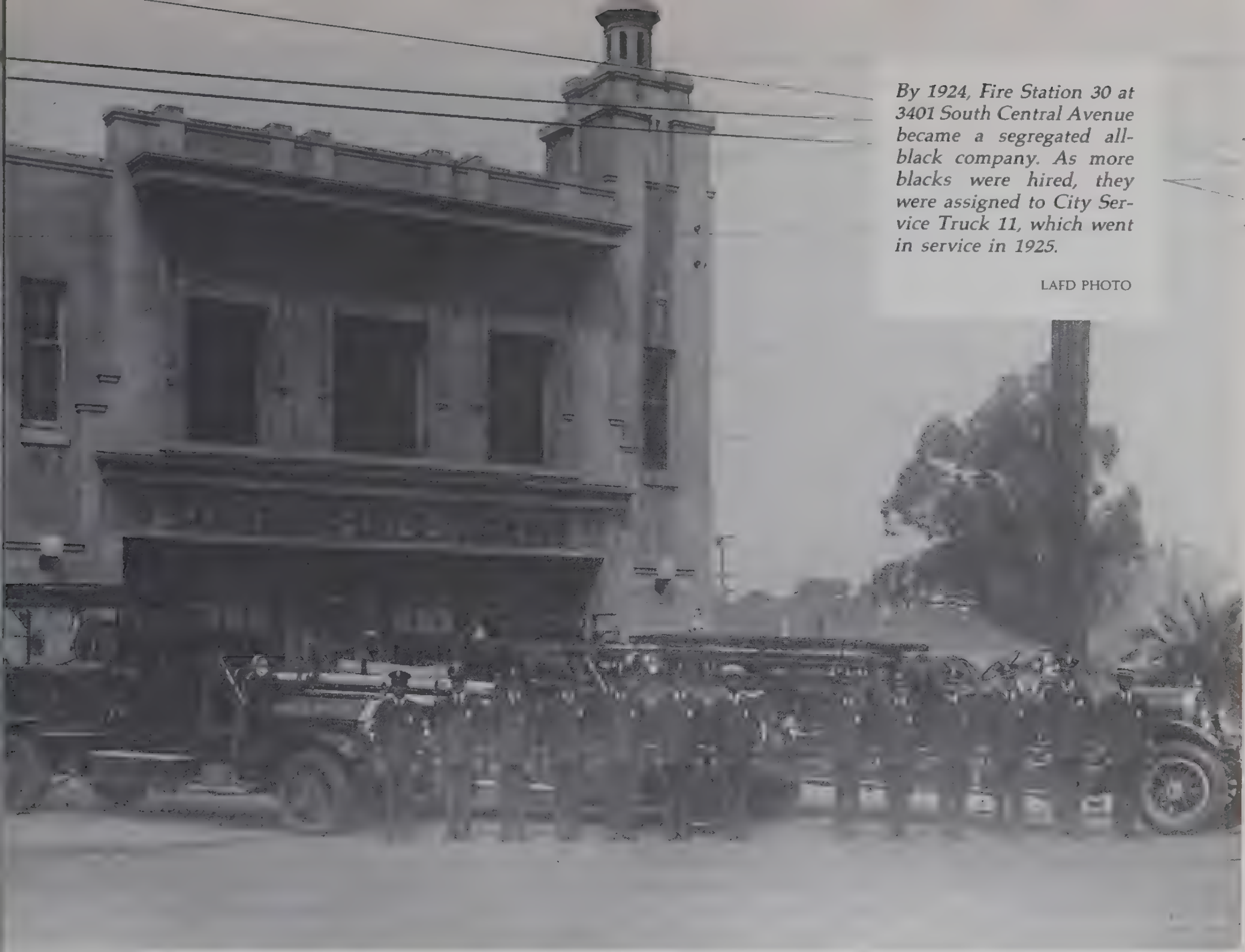
Even at that, the department's wrecker (heavy utility) was assigned to Fire Station 30, simply because there was insufficient riding room for all the firefighters on the engines and truck. Prior to Alderson's administration, staffing levels were maintained as blacks left the job by choosing replacements from the civil service list. As many as 400 names of eligible white candidates would be bypassed to reach a black on the list.

The procedure violated civil service regulations, but was nevertheless followed to insure perpetuation of all-black staffing levels at Fire Stations 14 and 30. The blacks, in turn, were hampered in their career aspirations because most of them were from the south where high school educations were either denied them or they were forced to quit school to work to support their families.

By 1953, there were 2500 whites and 74 blacks on the LAFD. Census figures showed blacks accounted for 10 percent of the city's population, but only 3 percent of the department's members. Because the blacks were largely assigned to the two companies (five were in the fire prevention bureau and six assigned to supply and maintenance) the highest rank they could hope to achieve was captain. There were at that time only six black captains. White captains numbered 287. The department was satisfied with maintaining the status quo and could point to all-black companies in other large cities, notably New

Explosions and fire in this 80,000 barrel storage tank at the Union Oil Refinery near Anaheim and Gaffey Streets in Wilmington, quickly ignited fires in and around six other large tanks. Seventeen others were severely threatened. LAFD firefighters, answering the first alarm at 2:07 p.m., July 12, 1951, battled the fire for four days before it was out.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF LEO NAJARIAN



By 1924, Fire Station 30 at 3401 South Central Avenue became a segregated all-black company. As more blacks were hired, they were assigned to City Service Truck 11, which went in service in 1925.

LAFD PHOTO

York, Chicago and Baltimore.

Los Angeles' black firefighters and their community leaders had mixed feelings. Many of the older black firefighters preferred the system as it stood. Shift-trading was informal, but even more the blacks feared the probable hostility they could encounter if transferred to a white company. Another proposal was put forward by the black community and many black firefighters: convert Engine 21 and 22 to all-black companies which would open up promotional opportunities for more captains and enable the department to form a battalion of all-black companies led by black chiefs on each platoon.

A third approach was the one primarily espoused by the younger black firefighters who planned to make the LAFD their career: immediate and total integration of the blacks at Fire Stations 14 and 30 into stations throughout the city. They found strong 14th Amendment constitutional support for their ideas as well as the backing of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and Los Angeles' black-owned newspapers.

Alderson, while personally favoring segregation, knew that integration of the department was inevitable. The mood of the time was that segregation was discriminatory as evidenced by a number of court decisions. The chief engineer rejected the idea of an all-black battalion. That would only perpetuate and broaden a longstanding problem and would likely result in federal court intervention. Alderson's plan was to proceed slowly, starting with integrating recruits during training at the drill tower. He believed that in less than five years most white firefighters would grow accustomed to working 24-hour platoon duty with blacks.

Slow integration was as much of an anathema to the blacks as immediate, forced integration was to Alderson. The chief's position was that the city charter required him to make appointments, promotions and transfers "for the best interests of all the people of Los Angeles." He further pointed out that during his 13-year administration, no black had been passed over for promotion or denied appointment to the LAFD. Forced integration, said Alderson, would detrimentally impact the morale and efficiency of the department.

Time and time again during the next three years, Alderson would say, "The chief engineer's responsibility is not to engage in any social experimentation." The black firefighters did not, of course, perceive of integration as a social experiment, but their constitutional right. As tempers flared on both sides of the issue, 90 percent of the department's white members began a campaign, including fund-raising, to support Alderson in the event the matter reached the courts.

In July, 1953, the issue was further muddied when Norris Poulson, a relatively unknown United States congressman became mayor after defeating Bowron's bid for reelection. Neither Bowron nor Poulson favored fire department integration. Congressman Poulson had, in fact, voted against fair employment practices legislation. In a situation reminiscent of an earlier little-known mayor who set out to get rid of Chief Engineer Scott, Mayor Poulson sought a way to oust Alderson.

The chief engineer, despite his close ties to Bowron, had officially remained neutral during the election campaign. Poulson told Alderson he deeply resented his campaign position, but claimed he had no immediate plans to seek ways to oust the chief. Poulson left no doubt, however, that Alderson's days as chief engineer were numbered. The integration issue provided Poulson with a ploy to force Alderson's resignation.

Poulson was in office barely a month when a NAACP-supported "Petition Concerning Racial Discrimination and Segregation in the Fire Department" was sent, August 17, 1953, to Alderson and the fire commission. Among the petition's allegations:

Blacks were not appointed to vacancies unless they existed at Stations 14 and 30. Blacks were not permitted to transfer from those stations to other companies in the city. Blacks were denied promotions above that of captain's rank. "These circumstances constitute discrimination contrary to the constitution and laws of the state and nation, in that equal protection of the laws is being denied the Negro firemen," said the petition.

Before the commission could take up the matter, Poulson wrote its members that if the allegations "are true, I am sure that you will agree that such practices are abhorrent in a democratic nation such as ours. I trust that your board will take such summary action as may be necessary to completely eliminate any such unfairness." That "summary action" was, of course, a thinly-disguised demand that the fire commission discharge Alderson which it had neither the votes, nor the power to do, without itself violating the city charter. Ignoring Poulson's letter and burying the petition as Item No. 22 on their October 8, 1953, agenda, commissioners told NAACP attorneys in attendance that the department was not practicing segregation. If they had proof to the contrary, they were to produce it at the next commission meeting.

From that day forward, the integration issue escalated into a full-blown problem with emotionalism overwhelming rational approaches to resolving the issue. For the first time, the media entered the fray and itself became embroiled in the problem. A ***Los Angeles Mirror*** editorial cartoon portrayed Alderson as a snail on integration. Other newspaper, radio and television accounts encouraged the public perception that Alderson was a racial bigot arrogantly opposing the mayor and the law of the land. By inference, the white members of the department were seen as rednecks themselves. The City Council, sensing the rapidly-heating issue, kept silent and provided no leadership out of the morass.

Paul Ditzel, a columnist for the ***Los Angeles Daily News,*** wrote a lead editorial which attempted to put the issue in a perspective that would calm mounting hysteria. The results were not at all what Ditzel expected. Proponents of forced integration attacked his personal and professional integrity. The NAACP suggested that Alderson, himself, had ghost-written the editorial. Alderson, in fact, never saw the editorial until the day it was published.

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS/UCLA RESEARCH LIBRARY

Eleven oil storage tanks were involved in a three-alarm fire, June 25, 1954, at the San Pedro Marine Terminal of Tide Water Associated Oil Company at Berth 116-117. Starting from the first alarm at 6:25 p.m., the fire burned for two days and resulted in the response of 37 pieces of apparatus from as far away as the San Fernando Valley.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF MR. AND MRS. RAY C. KENT

Truck 28, a 1943 Kenworth tractor and a 1923 Seagrave 85-foot wooden aerial ladder, backs into its station at 644 South Figueroa Street.

Pressure put upon the ***Daily News*** publisher resulted in Ditzel being stripped of his column. When firefighters discovered his byline missing from the paper, the department's grapevine telephones passed the word among firefighters and their families. The ***Daily News*** switchboard was so jammed by firefighters or their wives, friends and families cancelling subscriptions that reporters could not telephone their stories to the city desk.

The call-in campaign boomeranged. The publisher charged Ditzel with instigating the cancellations and put him off-duty for 10 days, prior to formal termination. The publisher subsequently relented, but Ditzel was demoted to police reporter and later wrote the last story ever to appear in the paper. ***The Daily News,*** for years in financial trouble, declared bankruptcy and its assets were purchased by Poulson's foremost supporters, the Chandler family-owned ***Los Angeles Times*** and ***Mirror.***

Alderson, meanwhile, was ordered by the fire commission to submit a report in answer to the NAACP petition. On December 10, 1953, Alderson made that report and noted that coincidental with the filing of the petition, nearly half of the department's black firefighters had applied for transfers to all-white fire stations. Prior to that time, the only transfer requests were to the fire prevention bureau and other special assignments. Said Alderson: "I respectfully recommend that your board stand on Section 78 of the city charter and that we continue to appoint, promote and transfer employees of the department for the best interests of all the City of Los Angeles." The fire commission approved Alderson's recommendation.

Poulson subsequently met with the fire commission and Alderson and, on January 7, 1954, he issued a news release that said: "The Board of Fire Commissioners has decided that there should be, commencing within the next six months, a gradual correction of these practices (racial segregation). I have acceded to this program of gradual correction of these policies." This time it was Poulson's turn to get boomeranged. Four of the five commissioners and Alderson issued their own statement which said they had agreed to nothing of the kind.

Two days later the NAACP threatened federal court action and obtained a Superior Court order to take depositions from Alderson and the fire commissioners. Exactly what was testified to in those depositions is not known, other than the commission had learned that 1700 white firefighters had written Alderson that they would quit or retire if blacks were assigned to their stations. Further exacerbating the situation were white supremacy groups throughout the United States which deluged fire stations with black-hate mail, posters and pamphlets.

While Alderson admitted it only to his closest associates, he knew the battle was lost and that racial tensions eventually would rip the department apart when Chief Justice Earl Warren of the United States Supreme Court on May 17, 1954, delivered the landmark decisions in the cases of *Brown et al versus Board of Education* and *Bolling versus Sharpe.* While those historic decisions applied to school desegregation, their implications pertaining to the traditional operation of the LAFD rang loud and clear.

The fire commission immediately asked the city attorney to rule whether the Supreme Court and other decisions applied to the LAFD. The answer was in the affirmative and Alderson was asked by the commission to respond on July 1, 1954. Alderson stubbornly reiterated his past position statements, while interjecting a new and headline-making statement: He would resign if the fire commission took over the assignment of personnel, transfers and other functions under his control. "I will not remain to see it (the LAFD) torn down to a second, third and fourth rate department."

Four LAFD captains and an auto fireman, meanwhile, formed what they called a Fact-Finding Committee and, on August 19, 1954, appeared before the commission with a petition signed by 1885 firefighters who asked that no final decision be made on integration before October 14. At that time they would submit their report based on visits to 18 of the nation's largest city fire departments and questionnaires sent to 375 cities with populations over 43,000. The committee reportedly had raised $500,000 among firefighters, police officers and their families to fund the study.

Without its own investigatory resources, the commission decided to wait-and-see the committee's report while ordering Alderson to produce an integration plan. The chief engineer's plan, submitted September 2, 1954, was voted as "unsatisfactory and void of any worthwhile constructive suggestions." Alderson was told to produce a specific blueprint for integration by September 30. On that date Alderson stunned and angered the commission by tossing the ball into their court: "If it is your policy to transfer Negros from Stations 14 and 30 to every station throughout the city, I do believe that I am entitled to know that and to be advised in order that I may advise you as to what procedure I will follow."

Poulson shortly thereafter intervened again and ordered the board to "break up the two Negro fire stations . . . If the chief refuses or fails to comply . . . replace him with a man who does not regard himself as above the laws of our city, state and nation. If you don't take action . . . you will be removed as commissioners by request of the City Council." Poulson set November 1, 1954, as the deadline for action.

On October 14, the Fact Finding Committee reported to the commission. Their findings were expectable and not at all what commissioners were looking for. The report spoke of "the natural barriers that exist between . . . the races," and of "rival political factions" competing for the black bloc "as the balance of power." Their conclusion urged the commission to "unequivocably reject forced integration."

Three days before Poulson's integration-or-get-fired deadline, the commission, on October 28, told Alderson that he was "hereby instructed, ordered and directed to initiate a gradual transfer of a part of the personnel now stationed at Stations 14 and 30." During the next four months, Alderson transferred four blacks to two all-white stations. One of them almost immediately asked to be returned to his all-black station. The gradual integration program ground to an impasse, but the battle was far from over and would worsen before it was finally resolved.

Beset by integration concerns, Alderson was growing physically and emotionally ill. The firefighters still called him "Big John" — but not to his face. It was clear that his was but a delaying action until full integration occurred with or without him as chief engineer. Even at that, Alderson and the department's members, despite the widespread public perception of them as racists, managed to win voter approval in May 1955, of a $400 million fire department improvement bond issue.

The funds went for new stations, many of them in the San Fernando Valley and for 21 new pieces of apparatus. They included 13 Crown Firecoach pumpers built in Los Angeles. The era of Crown pumpers had begun in the LAFD in 1953 with the $22,817 purchase of a 1250-gallon-per-minute triple combination pumper which was first assigned to Fire Station 23. By 1967, the LAFD had taken delivery of its 100th Crown. (The department ultimately bought 138 Crowns.) Also new to the fleet from bond money spent during 1956 and 1957 were five Seagrave pumpers and two Seagrave 85-foot aerials.

Despite the growing rancor among firefighters over integration, those concerns were put aside when the long ring signaled an alarm. Alderson proudly reported in his June 30, 1955, annual report that the department's fire prevention and fire

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Natural gas main explosion and fire in 1953 on Franklin Boulevard at Van Ness Street, challenged Hollywood firefighters to a lengthy battle.

suppression efforts had resulted in a 44 percent drop in $10,000-and-over loss fires. That record was especially remarkable, considering that post-World War II Los Angeles had recently gained 60,000 new residents and 61,000 new buildings valued at $400 million.

Preferring to let history judge him on the basis of his overall list of outstanding accomplishments, rather than on what he had not done to integrate the department, Alderson on November 1, 1955, announced his intention to retire, effective December 29, 1955. Five days after Alderson's retirement announcement, he commanded one of the largest turnouts of men and apparatus in the department's history for a brush fire in the La Tuna Canyon area in the Sunland section of the San Fernando Valley. The brush fire was the worst since the November 23-to-30, 1938, fire starting in Topanga Canyon near Malibu and extending for more than six miles along Sunset Boulevard to Mandeville Canyon.

Heat, low humidity and strong Santa Ana winds created a recipe for disaster that Sunday, November 6, 1955. At 12:27 p.m., the Van Nuys Signal Office received a call reporting a brush fire near 9645 La Tuna Canyon Road. Engines 77 and 60 were sent. Two minutes later, Engine 77 radioed a report of a large smoke cloud and asked for more companies. Flames spread with unbelievable speed as they were goaded by the Santa Ana winds up, down and along the thickly-grown brush and timber-covered slopes and canyons.

Engine 39, one of the first companies sent after calls for more help, mounted an attack on the Verdugo Fire Road along a ridge facing a canyon fire. Firefighters, deployed with handlines along the ridge, seemed to be getting a handle on their sector of the fire. About 2 p.m., the treachery and unpredictability so typical of brush fires, suddenly caused an eruption of flames which drove a fierce updraft from the canyon. Engine 39 firefighters were instantly in danger of being overwhelmed by the flames.

Sensing their peril, Auto Fireman James L. Catlow remained at the pump controls and continued to supply his company with water. Although repeatedly engulfed in fire and smoke, Catlow stayed with the engine while saving the life of Engine 39 Firefighter Oscar E. Cummings. Catlow suffered third degree burns on his face, hands and body. He died six days later. Catlow's wife accepted a posthumously-awarded Medal of Valor from Alderson.

Before the 4500-acre La Tuna Canyon fire was contained three days later, fire suppression needs resulted in the commitment of more than 120 LAFD vehicles, including 58 engines, 15 tank wagons, nine booster tank rigs, 10 Mountain Patrol units and two bulldozers. For the first time since World War II, the off-duty recall signal, 9-9-9, was sounded as firefighters manned stations as two-piece engine companies were split to provide coverage for the La Tuna Canyon blaze and the rest of the city. Joining this armada was help from the Los Angeles County Fire Department, the Burbank and Glendale Fire Departments and the United States Forest Service.

A postscript to the fire was one of the longest, if not the longest, water-relaying operation in the department's history. Because water supply in La Tuna Canyon at that time fell far short of needs, Capts. Alex Pitts and George Moore took charge of a 2.1-mile hose lay involving nine engines in this order: 6, 39, 81, 74, 83, 29, 73, 18 and 35. There would, during the 100-year history of the LAFD be many more and larger brush fires, including the Bel-Air-Brentwood disaster, but the La Tuna Canyon blaze would forever be remembered for the heroism of James Catlow.

The La Tuna Canyon brush fire, starting November 6, 1955, was the city's worst since 1938. Flames sweeping up a canyon threatened to overwhelm Engine 39 firefighters.

Auto Fireman James L. Catlow, sensing their danger, heroically stayed at the pump controls and continued to supply water, although he was repeatedly engulfed in heat and smoke. Catlow died six days later of third degree burns. His wife, Frances H. Catlow, accepted a posthumously awarded Medal of Valor from Chief Engineer Alderson.

LAFD PHOTO

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Auto Fireman James L. Catlow
Engine 39
Died of burns suffered in La Tuna
Canyon brush fire
November 12, 1955

The integration pressure cooker was, meanwhile, reaching the point of boilover. The battle spilled into the stations. Years of steadily-building tensions, frustrations, hate, rumors, propaganda and attacks upon Alderson by organizations and people who were perceived by the firefighters as knowing nothing about life in fire stations, provided all the necessary ingredients for turmoil.

The inevitable consequences were further complicated by some white firefighters who did not support segregation. They said they would not hesitate to work with blacks and were among the first to be ostracized by longstanding firefighter friends on and off duty. Several of them who openly challenged segregation were severely disciplined for insubordination and other charges.

As Alderson tested the mood of the firefighters by transferring blacks to all-white stations, he received little support from some chief officers and captains in the field, who frequently fueled the fires of hatred by their tacit encouragement of in-station opposition to integration. Their belief was that they were following the spirit of Alderson's policies and whatever means it took justified the ways. Apropos of the cliche: With friends like these, Alderson needed no more enemies.

CALIFORNIA
BELTING
AND
LEATHER
CO.
LEATHER

Downtown firefighters extend an aerial ladder and lay hoselines as attack begins during the September 11, 1949, burning of La Opinion *newspaper offices at Market and Los Angeles Streets. Site is now the location of City Hall East headquarters of LAFD.*

Black firefighters and white firefighters unopposed to integration were transferred to what was referred to in the department as "punishment" or "hate houses". Most of the hate houses were located in Battalion 8 on the south side of the city n a mixed white and black area. Black as well as white firefighters in these hate houses took the full brunt of blatant and covert humiliations.

In those pre-integration stations where blacks were assigned, kitchen privileges were often denied and a steady stream of practical jokes, a firehouse tradition, turned vicious, unspeakable, degrading and deplorable. When six blacks were transferred to Fire Station 10, the campaign of day-and-night hazings and harassments pushed matters to the point of imminent violence.

The Stentorians, an organization of black firefighters formed during the integration period, took their name from the Greek word, stentor (powerful voice). They adopted a non-violent stance and the slogan, "We only fight the department on integration." The Stentorians felt compelled to mount a round-the-clock patrol to guard the black firefighters at Fire Station 10. A television newsman volunteered to provide the Stentorians with special microphones to pick up and record the night-long hazings, so they could be broadcast during CBS Channel 2 news telecasts.

Other media as eagerly sought out stories which would llustrate racism in the LAFD. The department seemed all too eager to provide them. Two black firefighters and six white pro-integration firefighters were assigned to completely replace the all-white members of Fire Station 78 in the San Fernando Valley. Not one of the new assignees knew the district of commercial buildings, restaurants and high-value homes in the hills south of the station. Winding streets in the residential area were often difficult to find, even by the firefighters they replaced.

The media was tipped. Headlines told of the dangers of Station 78's complement of officers and firefighters totally unfamiliar with hard-to-find locations in their first alarm district. The stories resulted in precisely the perception the tipsters' intended: Station 78 assignments were made to prove that immediate, forced integration was resulting in poor fire protection and hazards to residents in that area.

By December, both Alderson and the Stentorians learned that the situation at Fire Station 10 was approaching a crisis. At least one black firefighter was carrying a gun for self-protection. Alderson, convinced worsening hatreds could explode at any moment into bloodshed, summarily and without consulting the fire commission, transferred all blacks back to Fire Stations 14 and 30.

Outraged by the steady stream of media and other reports of uncontrolled hazings and degradations in the fire stations and Alderson's summary transfer order, the fire commission on December 15, 1955, voted to immediately fire Alderson on grounds of insubordination. Their action had its Gilbert and Sullivan comedy opera aspects.

In the first place, the commissioners had flip-flopped so many times on integration, that nobody knew where all of them stood on any given day. Secondly, the commission would have sharply criticized Alderson if he had not acted, and one or more firefighters were injured or killed. And, finally, Alderson had already said he would retire on a date that was

Firefighters work in waist-deep water while battling a January 26, 1956, blaze among storage bins at the Ford Motor Company assembly plant.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF LEO NAJARIAN

only two weeks away. By formally-charging the chief engineer with insubordination and going through the long process of firing him, the commission would only prolong and probably intensify the integration misery.

The commission, realizing the shallow thought that went into their impetuous action, quietly let the dismissal matter drop. Alderson retired on schedule and was replaced by Deputy Chief Frank Rothermel who said he not only fully-supported Alderson, but would retire as soon as possible, too. Rothermel, serving as interim chief engineer, agreed to stay until Alderson's successor was named.

With the January 17, 1956, appointment of William L. Miller as chief engineer, the first order of business was a solution to the integration problem. Miller asked for time to do it. By then, all combatants were so weary that they agreed to give it to him. Two weeks into his administration, Miller transferred eight black firefighters from Stations 14 and 30 and eight white firefighters unopposed to integration, to Fire Station 7 at 2824 South Main Street. Miller said he intended it as an experiment. The experiment at Fire Station 7 worked.

By the following September and with comparatively little fanfare or difficulty, all black firefighters were transferred into 17 of the city's 91 fire stations. Hazings continued intermittently, but the long agony was over. All-black Fire Stations 14 and 30 were no longer segregated. They became integrated, too.

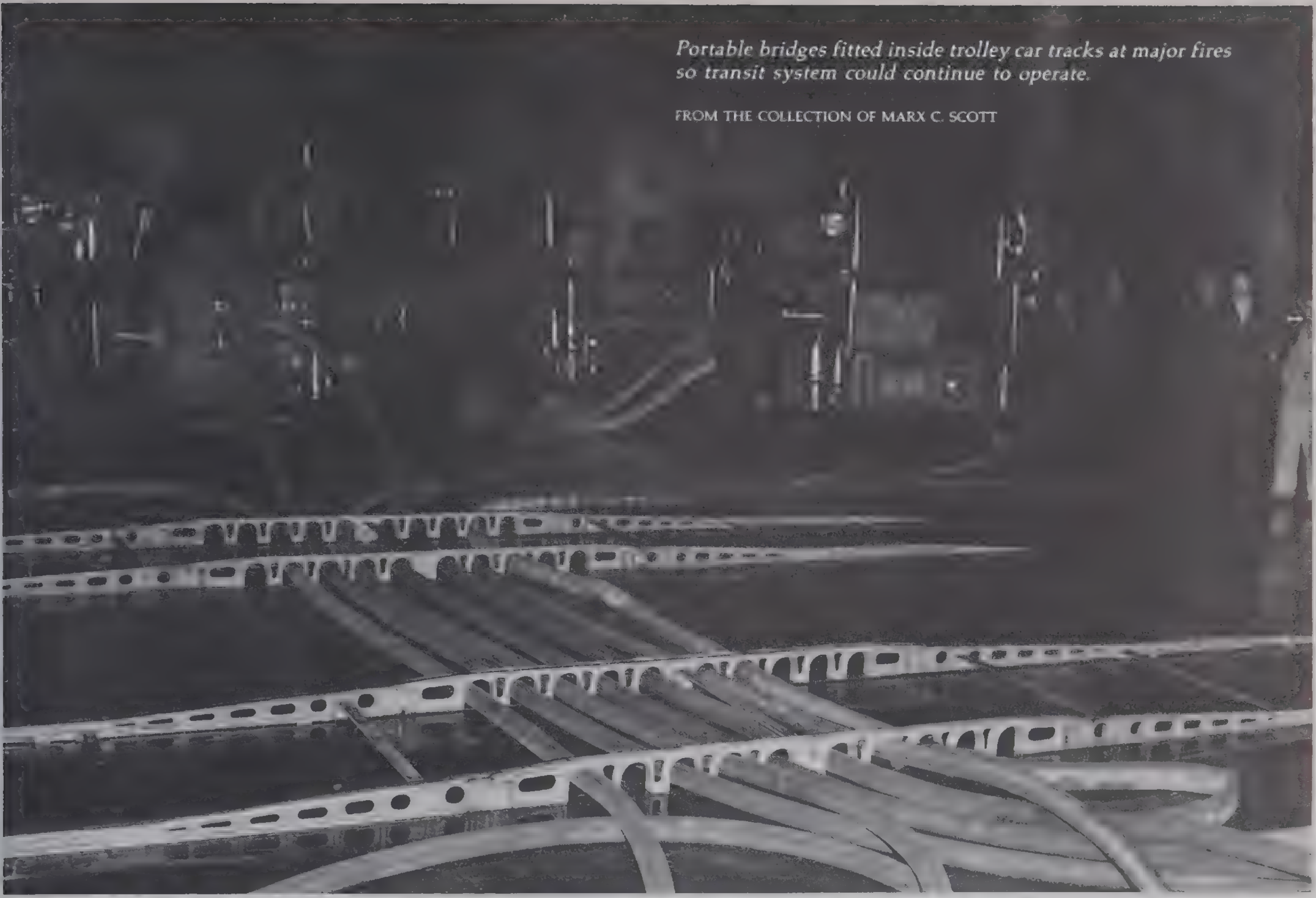
During the 30 years following Alderson's departure, memories of the integration nightmare faded, but never vanished. In the retrospective of time, longstanding questions can be answered and several observations are germane. The foremost question over the years: Could Alderson have avoided the years of agony that wracked the department? Yes, but with some equivocations. Alderson was a highly-principled person, albeit stubbornly unyielding. He believed in segregation and he fervently convinced himself that his legal obligations under the city charter prohibited assignments based upon race, albeit that some of the city's laws ran counter to the supreme law of the land.

If Alderson is to be faulted, the criticism must stem from his failure to take definitive action when he realized integration was inevitable. He should have taken that action before the problem got beyond his control. Those who knew him best say that Alderson's charisma among members of the department and his leadership strengths were such that the firefighters would have accepted integration, however unhappily, if only he had acted sooner.

It must be footnoted, however, that Alderson received precious little help or direction from most of the parade of Poulson-appointed fire commissioners during the integration years. Many of them were either segregationalists themselves, or waffled on the subject. Many officers in Alderson's administration thought they were helping him but were, in fact, compounding his problems. Alderson received no help at all from the City Council. And he neither expected nor got any from Poulson, who publicly-postured integration, but privately-supported the segregation status quo.

History demonstrates that valuable lessons can be learned from events of the past. With the integration horrors over, there were longstanding and positive fallouts . . . For starters, it helped propel one of the most outstanding black officers who ever served the department, Jim Shern, to become the LAFD's first battalion chief on February 6, 1968. Shern, thoroughly imbued with the LAFD's high standards of fire prevention and fire protection, went on to become chief of the Pasadena Fire Department and one of the few blacks ever elected president of the International Association of Fire Chiefs.

Jim Shern, who joined the LAFD on November 2, 1948, became the first black battalion chief on February 6, 1968. Shern retired on September 17, 1972, and became chief of the Pasadena, California, Fire Department. He was subsequently elected president of the International Association of Fire Chiefs.



Portable bridges fitted inside trolley car tracks at major fires so transit system could continue to operate.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF MARX C. SCOTT

Another upside of the integration aftermath, was that it reminded everyone of the fact that traditions die hard in the fire service. That the more than half-a-century of segregation tradition was broken in the relatively short period of time it was and without creating permanent rifts in the department, testifies to the resilience of the LAFD and its members.

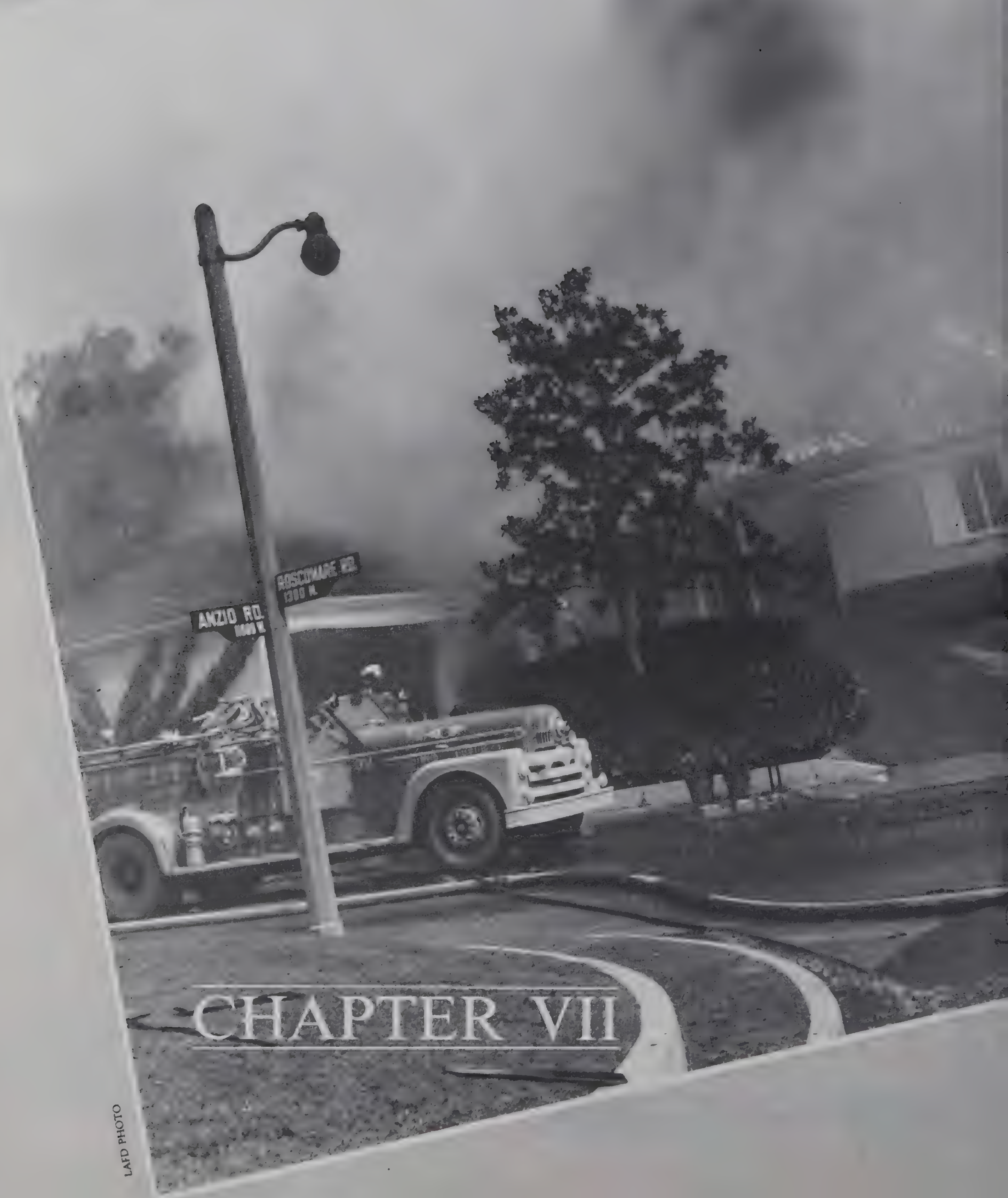
The hard and bitter lessons learned during the integration period surely had a helpful impact upon the entrance of women and other minorities into the uniformed ranks of the LAFD. With the leadership and unmistakably clear statements of minority policy by Chief Engineer John C. Gerard and his successor, Donald O. Manning, as well as fire commissioners, notably Ann Reiss Lane, the gradual acceptance of women and other minorities in LAFD stations precluded any revival of the integration controversy.

Alderson lived quietly in retirement and was only heard from publicly when he led a group encouraging construction of a fire station in the Playa del Rey section of the city. His former ***Daily News*** friend occasionally reminisced with him. Alderson said he had found peace of mind by rising early, driving out to the desert and watching the sun rise.

The chief engineer who brought the LAFD to Class 1 status, who became internationally-renowned as a fire department administrator without peer, who created the Junior Fire Department program, who brought fire losses in Los Angeles to record-lows and was one of only two LAFD chief engineers to be elected president of the International Association of Fire Chiefs, died of a heart attack, May 17, 1969, in Central Receiving Hospital. He was survived by his wife, Ethel, and a son, John, Jr. Alderson was 71.

During one of his final conversations with his ex-***Daily News*** friend, Alderson made one last story suggestion: "Someday you should look into the history of the Los Angeles Fire Department. I think it would make a fascinating book. Leave nothing out. Tell our history the way it was — or at least as close to the way it was — as you can possibly write it."

Engine 92 firefighters vainly attempt to prevent spread of flames to other homes at Roscomare and Anzio Roads, as Santa Ana-driven winds, wood-shingle roofs and low humidity combine to create disastrous conditions in Bel-Air and Brentwood. Los Angeles' worst brush fire destroyed 484 homes and 12 other structures and caused damages of $25 million.



LAFD PHOTO

CHAPTER VII

THE GREAT LAFD RACE AGAINST TIME

Los Angeles and its fire protection problems were dramatically different in 1956 from those that William L. Miller found when he moved to Los Angeles in 1928 from Iowa. Born January 31, 1906, in Morrison, Iowa, he arrived in the city shortly before the Wall Street stock market crash. His Cedar Rapids Business College training at first led him into administrative jobs, including district manager of circulation for the ***Los Angeles Examiner.***

Miller joined the LAFD during the Depression, June 1, 1933, and was first assigned to Engine 63 in Venice. Nine years later he was promoted to captain, April 16, 1942, and assigned to Engine 40 in the harbor. Miller served as 1941-42 president of the Los Angeles Firemen's Relief Association; a post no other firefighter who was to become chief engineer ever held.

During his years as a member of the department, Los Angeles had doubled in population to 2,300,000 people and was bursting with growth. Traditional tourism, Hollywood filmmaking and the agriculturally-based economy had transitioned during World War II and the Korean War years into aircraft, electronics, diversified service industries and light to moderately-heavy manufacturing.

The population growth escalated into an urban sprawl of a magnitude never experienced in the historical development of any city in the world. Vast expanses of open farmland in the 210-square-mile San Fernando Valley were being subdivided into housing tracts. Concurrent with the population explosion in the valley and West Los Angeles, came phenomenal growth in the number and type of buildings ranging from single-story frame houses with wood-shingle roofs to shopping malls and industrial parks.

The fire protection challenges attendant to this growth were awesome. Metropolitan area buildings were growing older and more fire prone. Fire stations in the San Fernando Valley were few and far between, as evidenced by more than 200 fires of over $10,000 loss in the valley during the year ending June 30, 1956.

Los Angeles International Airport was rapidly becoming one of the busiest passenger and cargo airfields in the world, but was ill-equipped to handle major crashes. Fortunately, the southland's temperate climate helped to make the airport one of the world's safest. Adequate air crash fire protection nevertheless was a problem that had to be addressed. The harbor, moreover, was bustling with activity as it became a global petrochemical port. While the incidence of harbor fires was low, compared to the potential, new fireboats and a new fire alarm system were badly-needed.

The highest potential for disaster, however, spanned the rugged terrain of the Santa Monica Mountain range, primarily from the Hollywood Hills west to exclusive Bel-Air, Brentwood and Pacific Palisades, where multi-million dollar homes were being built. What had been brush wilderness was rapidly-becoming an area dotted with tens of thousands of large homes, most of them with wood-shingle roofs, as affluent Angelenos sought the rustic beauty of living in canyons, hillsides and top-of-the-mountain sites with their panoramic vistas.

William L. Miller served as chief engineer from January 17, 1956 to July 16, 1965.

LAFD PHOTO

Miller first noticed the changing fire problems in Los Angeles when he returned from World War II duty as a lieutenant commander in charge of damage control while attached to the admiral's staff in the South Atlantic fleet. Promoted to battalion chief, October 1, 1948, Miller was first assigned to Battalion 9 in West Los Angeles where he saw at first hand the potential for disaster in a heavily-built brushland area short on fire protection.

After serving in Battalion 8, Miller was transferred to the fire prevention bureau where, on July 1, 1954, he was promoted to assistant chief in charge of the bureau. There was little question that Miller was Chief Engineer Alderson's heir apparent. The prolonged controversy over desegregating the department's two all-black fire stations had diverted and drained Alderson's energies for administering the department. The chief engineer relied heavily upon Miller to oversee day-to-day operations.

The department, as Miller moved, January 17, 1956, into the redwood-paneled chief engineer's office, included 2832 firefighters, 89 engine companies, 30 ladder trucks, 15 salvage trucks and eight rescue units. The LAFD had a ratio of only two firefighters per 1000 residents. Other large cities had four. First alarm districts of LAFD stations averaged five square miles, compared to less than two miles in cities of comparable size.

Compounding the department's problems was the need to replace antiquated metropolitan area stations dating to the horse-drawn equipment days and to build new stations in the fast-growing suburban areas. Even with recent apparatus purchases, about one of every four of the LAFD's engines and ladder trucks was 20-years-old or more. The fire service rule-of-thumb considers 20 years as the average service life of engines and trucks.

Some idea of the stark nature of the problem and how phenomenally fast it had escalated is to note that the excellence of the LAFD had, in 1947, earned it a Class 1 rating by the National Board of Fire Underwriters (NBFU). The city's population and building explosion had, only nine years later, put that Class 1 rating in severe jeopardy. The NBFU would survey the city again in a few years. Was there time and would there be funds to win the most difficult race with which the LAFD would ever be confronted: The challenge to retain the title of America's only Class 1 fire department among cities of over 500,000 population? Loss of that Class 1 rating would severely impact fire insurance rates which would surely soar.

Largely to assist in grading for programs targeted at meeting these problems, Miller on May 5, 1956, appointed seven deputy chiefs (previously the department had only one): Donald M. Hibbard, William R. Goss, Marvin E. Meador, Raymond M. Hill, Charles W. Bahme, Harold N. Johnson and Eric A. Lotz.

Rank-and-filers facetiously referred to the management team as Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. The term was at first only whispered among firefighters. Some were admonished by their officers for what they considered disparagement of Miller's new administration. Miller quickly learned of the nickname, was vastly-amused at what he considered a typical firehouse joke, and thereafter often referred to himself and his team as Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. Long after he retired, Miller still used the term.

Miller assigned Deputy Chief Hibbard to serve as the chief coordinator of the department's efforts to shave deficiency points which could cost the LAFD its Class 1 rating. The NBFU graders also would be examining other city departments and Hibbard would work closely with them, too. Parts of Los Angeles had, in the 1947 rating, received grades as low as Class 5 for deficiencies in the various elements, other than fire protection, which the NBFU used as guidelines while grading.

Deputy Chief Don T. Hibbard led the great LAFD race against time to save th department's Class 1 rating by the National Board of Fire Underwriters.

LAFD PHOTO

Firefighters and rescue workers used forcible entry tools to reach victims of Los Angeles' worst train wreck, January 22, 1956, when a two-car Santa Fe Railway train flipped over in the railway yards near Washington Boulevard and Santa Fe Avenue. Thirty people were killed and 150 injured.

Hibbard not only worked within the LAFD, but with the City Administrative Office, Water and Power Department, Building and Safety and other departments. If the city, as a whole, could be upgraded, the benefits to property owners would be worth the mighty effort it would take.

During Miller's first nine days as chief engineer, the department was confronted with two unusual emergencies. At 6:02 p.m., Sunday, January 22, 1956, Battalion 7 Chief Fred J. Newjahr's fire phone rang in his Fire Station 17 quarters. The Westlake dispatcher told him to "respond to the 2600 block of East Washington Boulevard. We've got reports of a train wreck down there."

When Newjahr arrived in the Santa Fe Railway yards off Washington near Santa Fe Avenue, he found a two-car passenger train lying on its side. At least 10 bodies were strewn along the tracks and more could be seen crushed under the cars. Train No. 82, bound for San Diego and only 12 minutes out of Union Station, had entered a curve near Redondo Junction at up to 70-miles-per-hour after Engineer Frank Parrish said he blacked out. Flipping over, the cars skidded nearly 200 feet. Spilled diesel fuel was less of a problem than cutting into the cars to search for survivors.

At 6:11 p.m., Newjahr radioed for manpower and heavy duty extrication equipment. Westlake sent Engine and Truck 17, Utility 3 (with floodlights), Squad 23 and Emergency 10 (one of the department's two heavy-duty wreckers). Eleven minutes later, Newjahr called for Truck 30, Utility 27 and Emergency 27. The overturned cars were laddered and firefighters, laboring under the glare of floodlights, used forcible entry tools to gain access to the injured and to help remove the dead. The on-the-scene telecasts of Los Angeles' worst train wreck, which killed 30 and injured 150, were the first time that local television stations gave live coverage to a LAFD major emergency.

Four days later, heavy rains and high tides overran levees in the Terminal Island area. The floodwaters surged across dozens of active oil wells and pumps adjacent to the Ford Motor Company assembly plant. Around 10 a.m., that January 26, 1956, a Ford transformer short-circuited. The flash ignited floating vapors from oils, gasoline and paint thinner. The resulting blaze touched off six large auto parts storage bins which themselves were waist-deep in water in an area of about 100-by-300-feet. Fifteen LAFD and Long Beach fire companies and fireboats battled the blaze which caused an estimated $3 million damage.

While developing ways to bring the LAFD up to standards which would save the department's Class 1 rating, Miller hit upon an idea which would have many ramifications. He would need public support for what would have to be a jumbo-sized bond issue for fire department improvements. Miller recognized that few people had ever been inside a firehouse. He decided upon a department-wide open house on the first Saturday in May.

The idea succeeded beyond his best hopes. Miller reported that more than 100,000 people visited fire stations that May 5, 1956, and had closeup looks at apparatus and firehouse facilities while being escorted by firefighters in dress uniforms. The following year, California Governor Goodwin J. Knight, with Miller's encouragement, proclaimed a statewide Fire Service Day, May 4, 1957. Fire Service Day thereafter became an annual event throughout California and serves to bring fire safety lessons and public awareness of fire departments to the public's attention.

Toward the end of 1956, one of the largest lumber yard fires in the city's history destroyed 1,300,000 board-feet of hardwood. The November 3, 1956, fire at the American Hardwood Company, 1900 East 15th Street near Alameda Street, was dis-

FROM THE COLLECTION OF LEO NAJARIAN

One of the largest lumber yard fires in Los Angeles' history destroyed 1,300,000 board-feet of hardwood during the November 3, 1956, four-alarm fire at the American Hardwood Company, 1900 East 15th Street.

covered by a night watchman, who first moved his automobile before turning in a delayed notification through an American District Telegraph Company private alarm box. At 6:48 p.m., Westlake dispatched Engines 17, 23 and 24, Trucks 17 and 24, Salvage 24, Squad 23 and Battalion 7 Chief Newjahr, who quickly called for a second alarm assignment of apparatus.

Flames quickly engulfed the "L"-shaped lumber yard. Aflame, or soon to burst into fire in the 230-by-500-foot yard, were more than a million board feet of lumber stacked over an area of seven acres, a 79,000-square-foot shed and 13 other structures in the American Hardwood Company complex. The second alarm quickly escalated into four alarms as a total of 17 engines, six trucks and other companies fought the blaze which required hose lays of as long as 1200 feet. Moveups included 42 companies; some from the San Fernando Valley.

Innovations in fire protection that had made the LAFD world-famous brought a record turnout of 1875 members of the National Fire Protection Association who attended the May, 1957, 61st conference of the organization. It was the first time the NFPA had held its annual conference in Los Angeles. Similarly compelling interest to see what the LAFD was doing, prompted 1995 members of the International Association of Fire Chiefs to hold its 85th meeting in Los Angeles, September 16-to-19, 1958. Never before had the IAFC visited the city.

Of special interest to the chiefs was Los Angeles' imminent law banning all open fires, effective October 1, 1958. During the following year, fires in Los Angeles dropped to 14,878 — the lowest in 14 years. The IAFC paid a return visit to Los Angeles, September 30 through October 3, 1984, when more than 7500 attended the association's 111th conference.

Better airport fire protection was high on Miller's agenda. When Fire Station 80 opened in 1956 at Los Angeles International Airport and, the same year, Fire Station 90 went in service at Van Nuys Airport, the highly-specialized era of professional air crash-rescue operations began in Los Angeles. The need for LAFD expertise in handling airport emergencies was not long in coming.

At 8:47 a.m., October 31, 1957, a Los Angeles International Airport control tower operator picked up the ringdown line to Fire Station 80 and the firefighters scrambled to their apparatus. The captain of United Airlines Flight No. 101, a DC-7 with 11 passengers and a crew of five, had notified the tower that his warning system indicated the right main landing gear could not be lowered. The *City of Hollywood* airliner from New York would have to make a belly-landing.

Captain William C. Shonborn and his Fire Station 80 crash crews turned out as did Engine 5, Truck 5 and Acting Battalion Chief Don W. Smith. Joining this force were crash companies from North American Aviation Corporation and the Douglas Aircraft Company. The tower diverted the DC-7 over the ocean to circle while depleting its fuel level to 500 residual gallons at touchdown. Airport crash firefighters prepared to lay a blanket of fire extinguishing foam along Runway 25L. A water-relaying operation would be necessary to do it.

At 9:10 a.m., a radio call ordered three more engines — 64, 54 and 34, Truck 63, ambulances and other equipment. Even as Shonborn supervised the laying of a 75-foot-wide and 1600-foot-long strip of foam, another commercial airliner lost an engine on takeoff and had to return to the airport where it landed safely on adjacent Runway 25R.

Minutes seemed like hours as the DC-7 circled the ocean Never in commercial airline history had a plane this large attempted a wheels-up landing on a blanket of foam. At las the pilot radioed he was ready. At 9:53 a.m., the *City of Hollywood* touched down and skidded, amid a shower of sparks and fire, 1610 feet — 530 of them in the foam — before it stoppe safely with no injuries. Runway foaming was shortly thereafter all but abandoned as a first-line defense against crash-landings. Better methods were developed as air crash and rescue apparatus became more sophisticated.

Two months later, the department on December 11, 1957 publicly demonstrated its new $60,000 air-crash-rescue apparatus built by Yankee Body Motor Corporation on a FWD Aut Corporation chassis. The 10-wheel-drive crash rig wa powered by a 324-horsepower Hall Scott engine. Its two For industrial engines each drove a 750-gallon-per-minute centrifugal pump. Two foam turrets were mounted atop the cab an had the capability of infinitely variable fog or solid strea patterns with either water or foam. Three ground-sweep foa nozzles were front-bumper-mounted. The new Crash 8 weighed more than 21 tons and had tank capacities of 1500 gallons of water and 165-gallons of liquid foam solution. Ove the years, better air crash and rescue apparatus was develope and acquired by the LAFD.

While airport protection was being beefed up, a ne $500,000 alarm box system was being installed, starting in lat 1956, in the San Pedro-Wilmington area. Each of the 323 boxe provided a direct telephone connection to the San Pedro Signa office across from Fire Station 53 at 438 Mesa Street. Caller could specify whether they needed fire, ambulance or polic help. The system had severe shortcomings. Vandals frequentl took the phones off the hooks in the boxes, thus resulting in false alarm problem. The boxes were among the first remove when the LAFD addressed the growing false alarm problem b gradually taking out all of them in Los Angeles by mid-197

A new LAFD service which eventually resulted in mor alarms than those for fire suppression started July 1, 195 when six rescue-ambulances were put in service at Fire Station 39, 60, 72, 74, 87 and 88. The department had been providin rescue and first aid, but not patient transportation, servic since 1927. Up to 1957, two LAFD ambulances at Fire Stations and 27 were primarily used to transport firefighters and the families.

Emergency ambulance service in the valley had been cit contracted among three private companies. With rising co ct costs and criticism of response times, the City Administive Office, on short notice, decided that the LAFD could er faster, more efficient and cheaper service. The departent quickly assigned 82 firefighters, many of them volunrs, to the rescue-ambulances. They received advanced medi- training, including childbirth, at Central Receiving Hospi-. That the LAFD was able to start superior rescue-ambulance vice in the valley within six weeks after being ordered to ovide it, was one of the most remarkable accomplishments the department's history.

Firefighter Vincent Pratt of Rescue 39, who was named rese-ambulance coordinator, reported that 46 percent of the st year's calls were for traffic accidents and 10 percent for art attacks. Rescue-ambulance drivers and attendants who isted at childbirths automatically became members of a adily-growing LAFD Godfathers Club. Pratt subsequently d that valley rescue-ambulance calls were increasing at the e of 2000 each year.

A portent of future hazardous problems along Los Angeles' eway system occurred November 14, 1958. A tank truck aded with 7600 gallons of liquefied petroleum gas was southund on the Hollywood Freeway through Cahuenga Pass. tween Pilgrimage Bridge and the Hollywood Bowl, the driv- swerved to avoid an automobile. The truck and trailer overrned. The impact snapped a plug atop the tanker and immeately released a spewing vapor cloud of highly-flammable tane. The truck driver climbed from the wreckage and stopped traffic.

Westlake got the call from the police complaint board and at 11:18 a.m., dispatched Engines 76 and 82, Truck 27, Salvage 27 and Battalion 5 Chief John P. Dick, who immediately called for an additional engine and was sent Engine 51. While the engine companies began applying water to the butane vapor cloud, Dick tied a lifeline around his waist, put on a breathing apparatus and told firefighters to cover him with protective fog sprays. He was going to walk into the vapor cloud and plug the leak by pounding a redwood plug into the hole with a rubber mallet.

Arriving on-scene, Assistant Chief Leonard L. Eggleston asked Dick why he was doing the job himself. "I wouldn't ask my men to do something I wouldn't do," Dick replied. Auto Fireman Douglas B. Evans of Truck 27, realizing the extremely perilous atmosphere Dick was about to enter, fastened a lifeline around his waist, put on a breathing apparatus and followed Dick into the vapor cloud. Evans positioned himself to help Dick plug the leak or quickly grab the chief and help him escape if the vapor cloud flashed.

A review board later reported, "Both men remained within the area of danger from possible fire until the leak was stopped. Should the gas, because of its solvent properties, have penetrated the rubber parts of the breathing apparatus, the men would have been exposed to possible suffocation." Dick and Evans were awarded medals for their bravery.

Hollywood area firefighters shortly thereafter were called to

A 1600-foot-long blanket of foam was laid by firefighters, October 31, 1957, preparatory to an emergency landing at Los Angeles International Airport by a United Airlines DC-7. There were no injuries in the belly landing, which marked the first time in commercial airline history that a plane this large had tried a wheels-up landing on a foam blanket.

UNITED
DC-7 Mainliner
CITY OF HOLLYWOOD

LAFD PHOTO

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Firefighter James E. Hassan
Engine 27
Died of injuries suffered when roof collapsed
December 11, 1958

a major fire, December 11, 1958, in the Magic Rug & Cleaning Company, 7518 Santa Monica Boulevard, in unincorporated West Hollywood. Engine 27 was one of the five mutual aid companies the LAFD sent at 9:17 p.m., to help Los Angeles County firefighters. Firefighters James E. Hassan, 41, and Gerry D. Baird of Engine 27, were advancing a hoseline inside the front door of the plant when the roof collapsed and they were felled by debris. Hassan was carried across the street to the Citizens Emergency Hospital, where he was pronounced dead. Baird survived serious injuries.

Exactly how thinly-spread Los Angeles' firefighting resources had become in the outlying brush areas of the city was demonstrated on December 31, 1958, when Los Angeles County firefighters, fighting a Topanga Canyon fire, spotted another brush fire in the city at about the same time the Van Nuys Signal Office was receiving a telephone report at 9:40 a.m., for a fire at 4241 Canoga Avenue in the Woodland Hills-Topanga Canyon area of the San Fernando Valley. Engines 84 and 72, Mountain Patrol Tractor 1 and Mountain Patrol Tank 2 were dispatched. During the next 10 minutes, Assistant Chief Harvey Anderson of the Los Angeles County Fire Department ordered 10 additional county engine companies into the area of Canoga and Mulholland Drive to help Los Angeles firefighters.

The LAFD had 22 companies on the fireline when another brush fire was reported at 3:42 p.m., at 10362 Tupelo Lane in Beverly Glen Canyon. Engines 41, 58 and Battalion 9 were sent. Five additional engines were quickly called as Santa Ana winds drove the fire through Beverly Glen Canyon toward Benedict Canyon. The problem worsened at 4:30 p.m., when Battalion 7 called for a full second alarm assignment to battle an industrial fire at 810 South Santa Fe Avenue. Altogether, 48 LAFD companies were committed and despite help sent by nine cities as far distant as Santa Barbara, nearly half of Los Angeles' fire stations were empty of apparatus and manpower.

Deputy Chief Don Hibbard declared a citywide major emergency. Miller, who was at home on vacation, responded to take command of the Benedict Canyon fire. Seventy-seven of the 97 companies committed to the brush fires were from the LAFD. The New Year's Eve nightmare was not as bad as it could have been. Firefighters lost only one house. Eleven others were damaged. They had saved thousands of homes.

Potentially catastrophic as they were, the brush fires were trifling, compared to the school disaster that month in Chicago. On December 1, 1958, a fire in Our Lady of the Angels Roman Catholic School killed 92 children and three teachers. Parents and fire departments the world over wondered whether their schools were safe from similar holocausts.

Battalion Chief John G. Degenkolb, head of the LAFD fire prevention bureau's school fire inspections, decided to seek answers to many questions, including: What actually happens when a school burns? How effective are self-closing smoke vents and other built-in protection? The only way to learn the answers was to set fires in schools and, as scientifically a possible, observe and measure the dynamics of smoke and hea propagation.

Degenkolb took his idea to Fire Marshal Raymond M. Hill deputy chief in charge of the fire prevention bureau and t Miller. Told to proceed, Degenkolb met with Board of Educa

LAFD PHOTO

Battalion 5 Chief John P. Dick and Auto Fireman Douglas B. Evans of Engine 27 were cited for their bravery after they entered a highly-flammable butane cloud to plug the gas spewing from an overturned tank truck, November 14, 1958, on the southbound Hollywood Freeway near the Hollywood Bowl.

Never in fire service history had a fire department embarked upon a testi protocol as scientifically ambitious and instrumented as the LAFD did duri Operation School Burning, *which demonstrated the dynamics of fires schools.*

FROM THE COLLECTION OF PAUL DITZEL

peration School Burning, a series of 177 test fires purposely set in abandoned chool burnings, provided authorities with answers to the questions: What appens when a school burns and what can be done to prevent loss of lives? he tests followed worldwide shock when a Chicago school fire in 1958 killed 92 children and three teachers. Results showed that without built-in fire safety, children and teachers would most likely die of suffocation before fire apparatus left firehouses.

on officials who offered the use of the condemned three-story rick-and-masonry Robert Louis Stevenson Junior High chool, 725 South Indiana Avenue. *Operation School Burning,* s the program became known, was jointly sponsored by the AFD, the Board of Education, the National Fire Protection ssociation and the Ford Foundation. Further support came rom the California State Fire Marshal, the National Automatic prinkler and Fire Control Association, the American District elegraph Company and the Minneapolis-Honeywell Regula- or Company. Many firms contributed instrumentation, sprin- lers and other necessary devices.

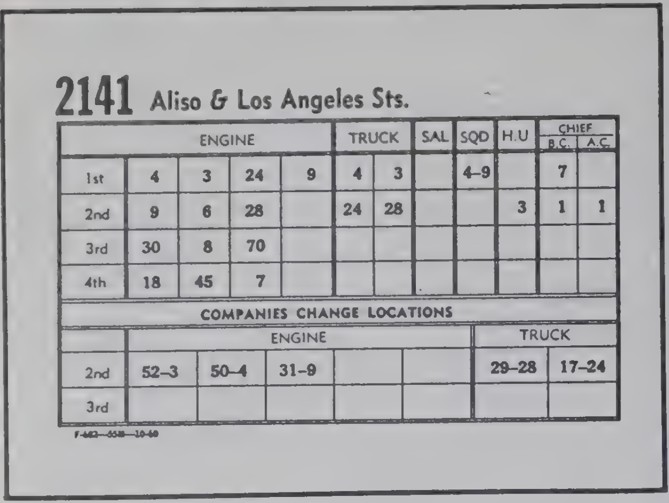
Operation School Burning required the development of typi- al school fire scenarios. The team was under the direction of Iill and Assistant Directors Degenkolb and Acting Battalion Chief Leo Najarian, who was in charge of instrumentation and ata recording. Instrumentation included clocks, thermocou- ling devices and photoelectric cells to measure heat, smoke uildup and smoke obscuration. Fire department observers vere placed inside the school to provide personal observations o lend further credence to the measurements. Never in the istory of the fire service had a fire department embarked pon a testing protocol as scientifically-ambitious, thorough- y-orchestrated and instrumented.

From April 16 to June 30, 1959, the LAFD set 150 fires in the chool. Fire apparatus stood by to extinguish the fires upon ompletion of each test. The Stevenson school fires provided ome answers, but raised more questions that could only be resolved by another series of fires. James Francis Cardinal McIntyre of the Los Angeles Catholic Archdiocese offered the use of the old three-story brick St. Agnes High School at Adams Boulevard and Vermont Avenue. The Board of Education provided the Santa Fe Avenue High School, a two-story brick building at 2320 East 16th Street.

While the fire scenarios were being developed, Degenkolb in May, 1961, supervised surprise fire drills at selected schools. He found that, under the best of conditions, at least one minute was required to evacuate each floor. That meant it would take a minimum of three minutes to evacuate St. Agnes High School and other three-story school buildings. Was that sufficient time to insure the safe escape of students fleeing a school fire? *Operation School Burning 2* would provide answers.

From June 30, 1960, to July 30, 1960, St. Agnes became the testing ground for 101 typical school fires which were as thoroughly instrumented as the earlier series. As the tests brought new answers and refined earlier results, 16 more fires were set between February 6 and February 14, 1961, in the Santa Fe Avenue High School.

LAFD observers, as well as fire protection authorities from throughout the United States, were startled by the rapidity with which a school fire could propagate to the point where lives would undoubtedly be lost. Several *Operation School Burning* observers, including Degenkolb, Najarian and Inspectors James Pogue and Dave Alexander, who were inside the schools when test fires were started, were themselves



2141 Aliso & Los Angeles Sts.

	ENGINE				TRUCK		SAL	SQD	H.U	CHIEF	
										B.C.	A.C.
1st	4	3	24	9	4	3		4–9		7	
2nd	9	6	28		24	28			3	1	1
3rd	30	8	70								
4th	18	45	7								

COMPANIES CHANGE LOCATIONS

	ENGINE					TRUCK	
2nd	52–3	50–4	31–9			29–28	17–24
3rd							

Firefighters in stations and alarm dispatchers used running cards to quickly determine which companies were to respond on first, second, third and fourth alarms, as well as those companies which automatically moved into some stations left vacant by second and third alarms. An alarm from Box Number 2141, Aliso and Los Angeles Streets, called for this assignment starting about October, 1960.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF GEORGE BASS

trapped by the fast buildup of heat and smoke and had to flee or be rescued.

The wealth of information gleaned from a total of 177 test fires in the three schools was published by the NFPA in two volumes, *Operation School Burning* and *Operation School Burning No. 2.* The books are crammed with information which would long stand as profoundly valuable to fire protection and school authorities, architects and builders around the world.

In essence, *Operation School Burning* showed that: If a youngster is going to die in a school fire in a building without proper protective devices, that student will probably be dead before the fire apparatus leaves the firehouse. Smoke, not fire, is the principal life hazard in a school without built-in fire safety. Measurements of the swift buildup of untenable smoke conditions almost immediately after the test fires were started, provided stark proof that school children would most likely not be able to see escape routes. Smoke irritants, moreover, would further increase the likelihood that students could not escape before they lost consciousness and died of suffocation in smoke-filled open stairways, corridors and classrooms. Without built-in fire protection, the probability of another Our Lady of the Angels school disaster was strong.

Miller, his deputies and staff were, meanwhile, continuing to gird for the great race to preserve the LAFD's Class 1 rating. By June 30, 1959, 976 new hydrants and 86.5 miles of water mains were installed. Ladder pipes were added to all truck companies without them. Studies of breathing apparatus were pushed and this would lead to providing breathers for all firefighters by 1965.

Until 1957, the department had no codified procedural plan for major emergencies. That was remedied by the publication, November 5, 1957, of the ***Emergency Operations Procedures Manual*** (predecessor to the Incident Command System) which largely dealt with brush fire suppression procedures. A new recall system went into place at the same time as did a new plan for splitting two-piece triple combination engine companies and manning them with truckmen, rescue and squad firefighters as well as recalled, off-duty members. Ten fully-equipped triple combination pumpers were put on reserve status to further augment the needed fast and large commitment of men and resources when the inevitable brush fires occurred.

Telephone alarms were received in a dispatching room adjacent to the fire alarm box registers at the Westlake Signal Office. Toggle switches activated audio alarm systems in firehouses.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF LARRY HOERNER

The plan proved its value, July 10, 1959, when a brush fire was reported at 8500 Lookout Mountain Avenue in the thickly-settled, heavy brush area of Laurel Canyon. At 3:40 p.m., Engines 45, 76 and Mountain Patrol units were sent. The Santa Ana-driven fire quickly resulted in calls for Engines 82, 71, Truck 27 and Salvage 27. Before the major emergency was over, the fire resulted in calls for dozens of companies, including helicopter assistance from the Los Angeles County Fire Department and pumpers from the Beverly Hills Fire Department. When the fire was contained at 9:20 p.m., 38 homes were destroyed and many others damaged in the relatively-small area of the 300-acre burnout. Without the plan, losses probably would have been catastrophic among the thousands of expensive wood-shingle roof homes in the area.

At the core of the race to retain Class 1 status, was Proposition A, a $14.5 million bond issue for fire department improvements. This largest bond issue in the history of the LAFD qualified for the May 26, 1959, ballot. Long before election day, on and off-duty firefighters began building public support for this staggering expenditure which everyone agreed would be a hard sell to taxpayers.

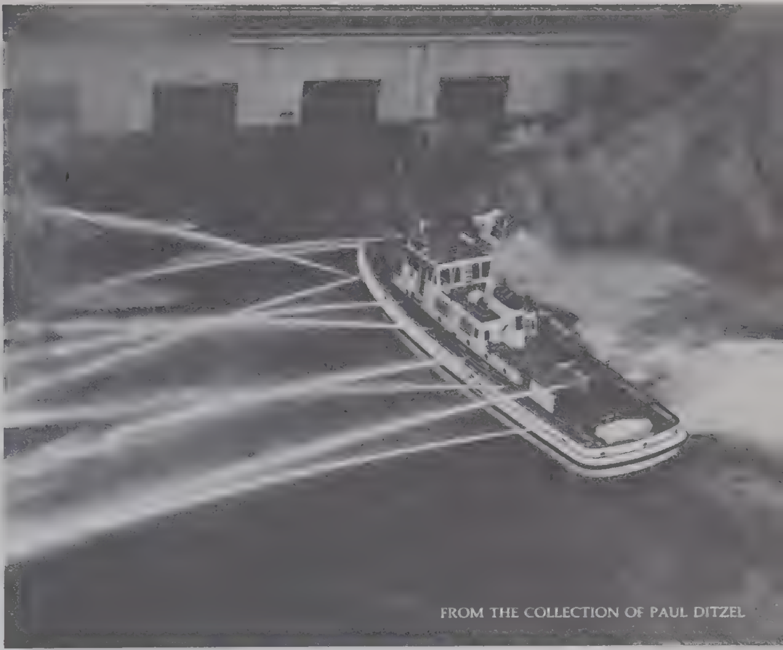
All fire companies went on radio-watch in their first-alarm districts while firefighters walked from door-to-door and business-to-business with easy-to-read pamphlets and windo cards explaining why Proposition A was so essential to th well-being of taxpayers and the city. Business and civic group were canvassed, told of the needs and they added their support Billboard space was contributed at key locations throughou Los Angeles.

Never in the history of the department did so many firefighters work so hard to personally join the race to retain th LAFD's Class 1 rating through their encouragement of th passage of Proposition A. Without their dedication, the proposition would have failed. That it barely passed was not a significant as the improvements which followed during th next years.

The department immediately placed orders for 26 Crow triple combination pumpers and six Seagrave 100-foot meta aerial ladders. During the next five years, 28 new fire station would be built: 16 of them in the San Fernando Valley. Ont

FROM THE COLLECTION OF BILL DAHLQUIST

Thick, biting smoke from burning creosoted wooden wharfage confronted ireboat 2 firefighters with seemingly endless hours of strenuous work, as Big Bertha and other guns bored into the smoke during the March 17, 1960, Matson Terminal fire in Wilmington.


FROM THE COLLECTION OF PAUL DITZEL

Among Boat 4's features was the ability to overcome traditional water pressure back thrust problems by directing streams into the water in directions opposite from where the firefighting guns are operating. This feature is shown as Boat 4 moves slowly to starboard while battling the December 28, 1967, fire at the Harbor Grain Terminal, berth 174.

he drawing boards went planning for a new supply and mainenance facility as well as designs for the Coldwater Signal Office to replace the alarm offices in West Los Angeles and Van Nuys. Down the line, some of the funds would go toward construction of new headquarters facilities in City Hall East. So, too, would money go for an Operations Control Division (OCD) communications center. Ultimately, OCD would become the focal point for all alarms.

Further strengthening the department's case for retention of its Class 1 rating was implementation of a plan to combine salvage and rescue service into multi-purpose squads. There were, in 1960, 15 salvage and five rescue companies, not includng the valley's rescue-ambulances.

Three factors impacted the decision to combine the services. ncreasing rescue calls demonstrated the need for more rescue squads. The start of the three-platoon system, November 30, 1960, would require manpower adjustments. By combining the two services, the initial annual salary cost-savings would amount to $134,000. Of special significance, moreover, was the National Board of Fire Underwriters' grading schedule. The LAFD, when it came time for another review, would receive more credit points for better citywide salvage coverage. Through readjustments in manpower and relatively minor apparatus modifications done in the LAFD shops, the optimum number of NBFU credit points would accrue from the resulting 16 squad companies.

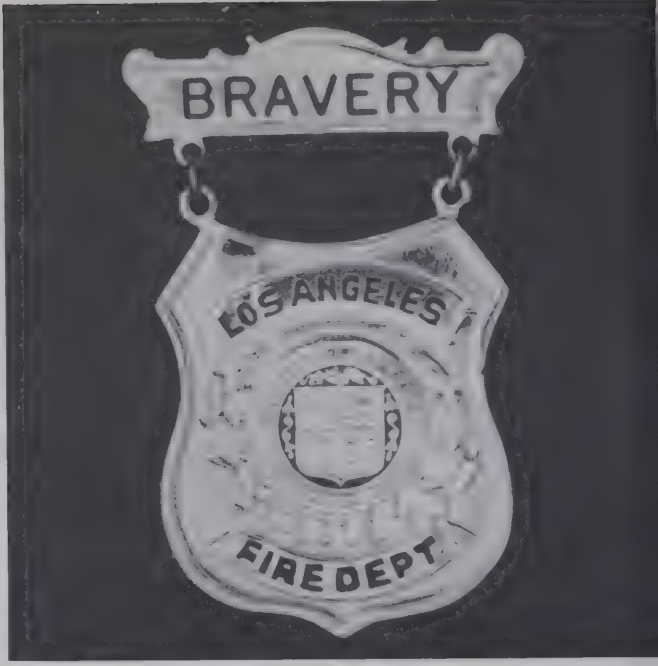
Salvage 28, a five-man company, remained intact in the high-rise downtown district, but was equipped with an inhalator and other rescue equipment. The expedited conversion program took only two months and was completed, September 19, 1960, when Salvage 60 became Squad 60. By the time the National Board's inspection team arrived, they would find the LAFD had effectively put in service 17 multi-purpose rescue and salvage squads.

While the LAFD steadily chipped away by every means to eliminate deficiency points which could jeopardize its Class 1 standing, the St. Patrick's Day, 1960, waterfront fire was to be remembered for two things: one immediate and one long-range. At 3:42 p.m., that March 17, the San Pedro Signal Office received a report of a burning barge at Berth 200A in Wilmington, near the Matson Terminal. Dispatched were Fireboats 2 and 3, Engines 49, 38, Truck 38, Salvage 53, Boat Tender 36 and Battalion 6 Chief Angus MacDougall.

Firefighters found flames stabbing underneath the long wharf with its spider webbing of stout wooden pilings and supports. Gnawing rapidly along the creosoted underpilings, the flames immediately jeopardized a 128-foot-tall gantry crane and the Matson Terminal that extended 672 feet along the wharf.

Enormous clouds of smoke caused San Pedro dispatchers to call Westlake and ask that more companies be started toward the harbor. The wharf fire was to become one of the hardest-fought and most-difficult in the history of the harbor. Joining the battle would be a total of 21 engine companies, five trucks, the three LAFD fireboats, plus 10 pieces of specialized apparatus; mostly from the metropolitan area of the city. A special call brought the Long Beach fireboat.

As Fireboat 2 moved in with all turrets boring into the flames, or to lay protective streams on the legs of the gantry crane, the smoke thickened so badly that it filled the boat's engine room and forced firefighters to put on breathing apparatus. A worse smoke beating was being taken by firefighters on the wharf. Laboring with jackhammers and power saws, they battled to cut access holes through the wharf's thick asphalt covering and four-inch-thick sheeting under it.



Bronze Medals of Bravery were the predecessor of the Medal of Valor. This medal was presented to Firefighter William A. Burnidge o Engine 68 in recognition of his heroic rescue of Truck 26 Firefighte Thomas O. Morse, who fell through the roof of a burning commercia building. Burnidge's medal was one of three presented on March 8 1961, when the LAFD celebrated its 75th anniversary in the Biltmor Hotel Bowl. Morse died of burns three days later.

The underwharf fire moved faster than firefighters could cut holes. They found flames had chewed far behind the points where they had cut their holes and inserted hoselines supplying distributor nozzles. Thick, biting creosote smoke made the work extremely difficult and calls went out for more breathing apparatus. Squad 23's Green Hornets, the only LAFD company fully-equipped with breathers, joined the battle on top of the wharf and later boarded Boat 2 to handle hoselines jetting into the smoke-shrouded underwharf flames.

The fire raged unchecked throughout the afternoon and into the evening. Around 9 p.m., Boat 2, a Navy fireboat and Boat 3 formed a battle line of attack and, one-by-one, made passes along the doomed wharf in attempts to penetrate the seat of the fire. Not until 3 a.m., the next day, was Deputy Chief William R. Goss able to declare the fire under control. Losses in the $65 million fire included 1100-feet of wharf. Saved was the $350,000 gantry crane and the Matson Passenger Terminal and warehouse installation valued at $110 million.

The Matson fire once again demonstrated the difficulty of fighting underwharf fires. Fireboat streams cannot penetrate the network of thick pilings and criss-crossing supports which create hundreds of inaccessible pockets for fire to burn unchecked. Access from the top of the dock is extremely difficult because of the stout sheeting which is usually covered with asphalt or some other topping. Working conditions are, moreover, treacherous due to the overwhelming smoke and gases given off by the creosote.

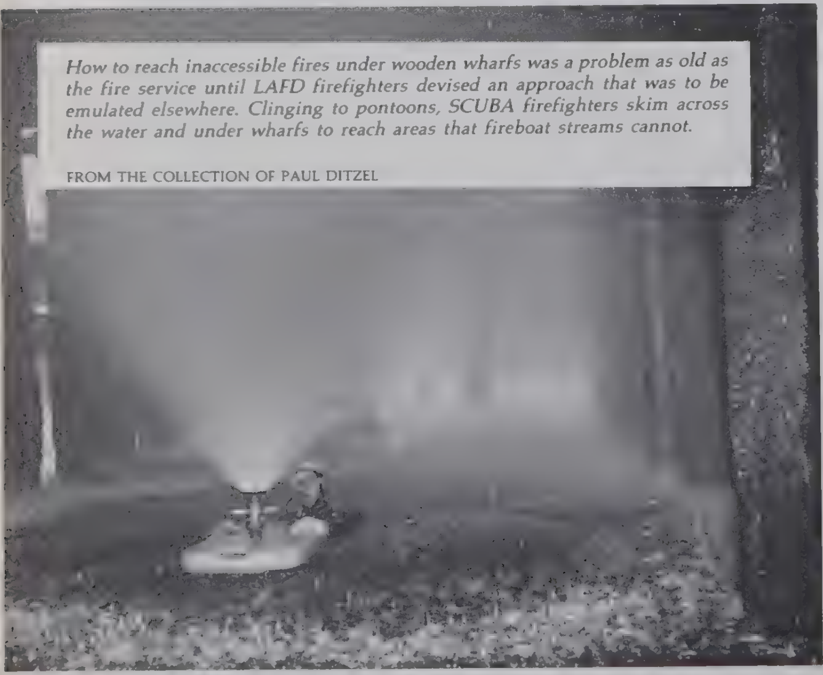
Shortly after the Matson fire, Assistant Chief William W. Johnston, Jr., a skin diving hobbyist, heard of experiments by other departments which were sending skin divers with hoselines under burning wharfs to make a direct attack with handlines on inaccessible areas. Johnson refined the idea of SCUBA (self-contained underwater breathing apparatus) firefighting to its pinnacle.

Despite many discouragements, the LAFD was, through Johnston's persistence, able to field trained teams of SCUBA firefighters wearing standard skin diving wet suits. Johnston's pioneering experiments also found that SCUBA firefighters would rarely have to go underwater. Clinging to small handheld floats the SCUBA firefighters skimmed across the water and under the wharfs by means of the back water pressure in the hoselines. Another surprise was the discovery that they could handle large hoselines. One SCUBA firefighter coul readily operate a two-and-one-half-inch line. One fireboa could supply about 10 floating monitors. A two-and-one-half inch adjustable spray nozzle was mounted on each float an delivered 440-gallons-of-water-per-minute at 100-pounds pressure.

There were, of course, dangers while working in the wate and the SCUBA firefighters adapted the standard buddy system used by skin diving enthusiasts. Operational by 196 more than 200 firefighters would complete SCUBA trainin As developed by Johnston and copied by many department around the world, three teams of two men each were assigne to the three fireboats as an initial attack force. The SCUB firefighters suited up while the boat was responding, if the saw the fire involved a wharf. SCUBA firefighting led t many spinoffs, including recovery of firefighting tools (suc as some lost overboard during the Matson fire), underwate search and rescue, as well as maintenance of zinc plates o fireboat hulls without the costly downtime of putting the into dry dock for regular cleaning.

Despite the Matson and other hazardous fires during the years, the LAFD had fortunately not lost a member in the li of duty. At 10:47 p.m., January 17, 1961, Westlake dispatche Engines 45, 26, 68 and Truck 26 as well as Battalion 3 Chi James Miller, following a report of fire in a two-story comme cial building at 1101 South Crenshaw Boulevard. Captain Dev ey F. Littlefield of Truck 26, seeing smoke puffing from att vents, called for an additional ladder company in anticipati of a major ventilation problem.

Truck 26 extended its aerial to the roof and Firefight Thomas O. Morse was first up it. As he stepped onto the fir weakened roof, it gave way. Morse fell into the blazing att but managed to stop his fall and pull himself back onto t roof. Firefighters were so busy laying lines and preparing attack that none of them saw Morse's plight. Their attenti was first called by spectators screaming that a firefighter



How to reach inaccessible fires under wooden wharfs was a problem as old as the fire service until LAFD firefighters devised an approach that was to be emulated elsewhere. Clinging to pontoons, SCUBA firefighters skim across the water and under wharfs to reach areas that fireboat streams cannot.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF PAUL DITZEL

ne roof was afire. Firefighters looked up and saw Morse's
urnout coat and trousers were burning while he was silhouet-
ed by flames soaring 20 feet from the attic hole through which
e had fallen.

Firefighter William A. Burnidge of Engine 68 rapidly
limbed the aerial, reached Morse and pulled him onto the
dder. Burnidge threw himself onto Morse and, with his bare
ands, beat out the fire. Then he slid the flailing Morse down
ne ladder as Assistant Chief Forrest W. Moore arrived to take
ommand of the greater alarm fire. Morse and Burnidge were
ushed to Central Receiving Hospital. Morse suffered severe
urns over 70 percent of his body. Burnidge was treated for
econd degree burns on his fingers and palms of both hands.

Battalion Chief James Miller left the fire and hurried to the
ospital. Morse told him: "I sure want you to pass my thanks
long to Burnidge. He was all over me. He laid on me. He
atted the flames out with his hands and he kept the fire out of
ny face and prevented me from falling off the ladder."

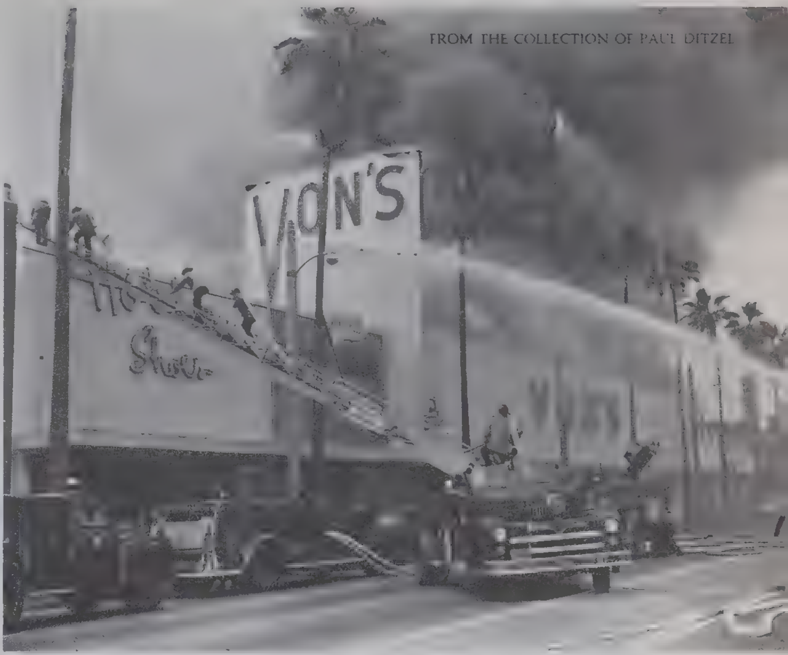
Seven weeks later, the LAFD celebrated its 75th anniversary
n March 8, 1961, with nearly 1100 firefighters, their families
nd civic leaders in the Biltmore Hotel Bowl. Among those
onored that night were Moore, 67, in recognition of his un-
recedented 46 years of LAFD service and three firefighters
ho were awarded Medals of Bravery: Burnidge for his rescue
f Morse; Firefighter Edwin B. Smith of Engine 82 for his off-
uty rescue of a woman from a burning building at 15106
Minnehaha Street in Granada Hills and to Firefighter Leo S.
Iellein of Truck 73, for saving the life of a man trapped in a
ully-involved house. Mellein thus became the first LAFD
refighter to win the Medal of Bravery twice. He had made a
imilar rescue the previous year.

As keynote speaker, Chief Engineer Miller summarized the
epartment's history and achievements, even as a greater alarm
re was being battled near the downtown Civic Center. The
hief engineer introduced Mrs. Tom Morse and said he had
nvited her to the banquet "from her husband's bedside." Mill-
r added that Morse's "wife and three little daughters — and
000 firemen and their wives — are hoping, praying and wait-
ng for the day that Tom and Daddy is able to come home." It
vas not to be. Thomas O. Morse died three days later.

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Firefighter Thomas O. Morse
Truck 26
Died of burns suffered in fall through roof
March 11, 1961

Monday morning, November 6, 1961, was already hot and
nuggy when teletypes in all LAFD stations began clattering a
rush fire alert at 8:03, while Santa Ana winds were gusting
nore than 25-to-35-miles-per-hour. The Weather Bureau re-
orted the fire danger index rating was soaring to a reading of
8 out of a possible high of 100. Fire inspections and all
outine, non-emergency assignments ceased. Companies were
rdered to remain in their stations. Dispatchers began sending
ompanies into brush fire areas to bolster defenses. The ques-
ion was not whether there would be fires in the mountainous
rushlands that day, but where, when and how bad they would
e.



FROM THE COLLECTION OF PAUL DITZEL

Three firefighters were trapped when the roof of Von's Market, 6651 Van Nuys Boulevard, collapsed shortly after the 3:21 p.m., alarm, January 31, 1960. Before they were rescued by ladders and pulled through rear windows, Firefighters William Newman and Richard Dunavant of Engine 39 and Firefighter William Dierck of Engine 78, suffered severe facial burns and cuts. Also injured during this Sunday afternoon fire was Capt. Connie Tidwell of Truck 60, who suffered a right knee gash that required 17 stitches.

As the department went on disaster standby, three grading contractors were starting to bulldoze a new housing subdivision in Sherman Oaks, just north of Bel-Air. They noticed wisps of smoke and flames among some grass clippings and rubbish. One ran to a house at 3651 Stone Canyon Avenue, where Mrs. Walter Bockwoldt called the fire department. Buzzers and long rings of bells went off in fire stations as the Van Nuys Signal Office dispatcher made the 8:15 a.m. dispatch: "Engine and Tank 88, Engine 78, Mountain Patrol 1, Engine 39, Engine and Truck 83, Truck 29 . . . Respond to a reported brush fire at 3651 Stone Canyon Avenue . . ."

Firefighter Bill Porter was acting captain of first-in Engine 88. As the company pulled out of the Sepulveda Boulevard Station, Porter saw the smoke and said, "My God! Look at that loomup!" Porter grabbed the engine's microphone. "Engine 88 to Van Nuys. We've got a large loomup. Dispatch two additional engine companies . . ."

Assistant Fire Chief Henry Sawyer heard the initial dispatch in his Mountain Patrol headquarters on Mulholland Drive. Realizing the potential for disaster in the area, he decided to respond and was already on his way when he heard Porter's sizeup. When Sawyer arrived, he saw that the wind-driven flames were spreading fast and making a run up the slopes toward Mulholland Drive, along the northerly boundary of Bel-Air Estates.

At 8:26, Sawyer radioed for 15 more engines and six chiefs, thus activating the LAFD Major Emergency Operational Plan which mobilized the entire department. Additional companies were barely pulling out of their stations when the southwesterly winds blew bits of flaming brush high in the air and sprinkled them across Mulholland. The fire was now spearing into Bel-Air.

It was essential that Sawyer get above the fire to direct

Bel-Air flames traveled so fast that firefighters were forced to abandon many homes while attempting to save others. Some of the worst destruction occurred in the 1700 block of Roscomare Road.

GEORGE R. FRY, JR./LOS ANGELES TIMES

operations. The area was too vast and the canyons too difficult to see from the ground. The LAFD had yet to put in service its first helicopter, so Sawyer hitched a ride in a KMPC radio news helicopter. What he saw as he orbited the fire was alarming. Driven by the Santa Anas, dozens of spot fires on the Bel-Air side of Mulholland were spilling down into Stone Canyon, while feeding upon tall brush that had been thickening for more than half a century.

While firefighters made a stand along Mulholland, dozens more engines were directed into Bel-Air from Sunset Boulevard. From their command post at Donella Circle and Roscomare Road, Assistant Chiefs Robert E. Radke and Thad T. Whippo hoped they could pinch off the flames along an east-west fire road above Bel-Air. While firefighters made-ready to attack flames tumbling down toward them, Radke and Whippo called for an air tanker drop of fire retardant borate. But their optimism was short-lived. The violent winds continued to push serpentine fingers of flame deep into Stone Canyon.

Meanwhile, the fierce winds were creating heavy turbulence in Sawyer's helicopter. He tried to break through the babble of radio messages to warn that the fire was racing dangerously close to a ridge where — unseen by firefighters on the ground — it could spill over into a new area. But the radio was so jammed with traffic that he could not be heard. Radke's and Whippo's call for a second borate drop could not get through, either. Flames stormed into Stone Canyon and the Donella line was lost.

Shortly after 9 a.m., tidal waves of flame spilled into the upper reaches of Bel-Air. The fire was gathering still more speed and chewing through the crackling brush at the rate of more than 13-acres-a-minute. Battalion Chief Oliver H. Howard radioed, "I've got a house burning on Stradella." The house at 2155 Stradella Road was new, unoccupied and cantilevered over the flaming brush in the canyon below. It was the first house destroyed. Two minutes later, Howard reported, "I've got a lot of houses burning on Stradella."

Hundreds of chunks of flaming brush were scooped up by the gale-like winds and scattered among wooden roofs which quickly-ignited. Radiant heat caused other houses to blossom into flames. They were engulfed within minutes. The Santa Anas peeled off thousands of burning shingles, sucked them high into the air, and broadcast them several miles in advance of the jagged perimeter of flames zigzagging through Bel-Air. Dozens more fires quickly kindled on wood rooftops.

After knocking down flames in one building, fire companies quickly leapfrogged each other to protect others. Their work was made more difficult because there were no interconnecting roads along Roscomare and Stradella Roads for two miles. Damage here would be especially heavy. Firefighters desperately protected buildings they knew they had some hope of saving and abandoned dozens of others already blazing.

"One minute one house was burning, the next minute there were 50 or 60 blazing," said Chief Engineer Miller, who took command along Mulholland Drive. The firefighting force, bolstered by the recall of off-duty firefighters, was to grow to 2500 at the peak of the fire, with more than 200 pieces of apparatus ordered into the battle. By 10 a.m., there were 54 LAFD companies on the firelines. Mutual aid calls were bringing in more from 32 cities around Los Angeles.

Chief Keith E. Klinger of the Los Angeles County Fire Department led 22 more pieces of equipment. The United States Forest Service and the state Department of Forestry answered with more than several dozen additional pieces of apparatus;

The Bel-Air-Brentwood conflagration started at 8:15 a.m., November 6, 1961, and was the worst in the city's history. Fierce Santa Ana winds hurled burning brush and flaming wood-shingles miles in advance of the main firefront and sowed hundreds of spot fires on wood-shingle roofs and brush. The 19-mile perimeter of fire destroyed more than 500 structures, many of them multi-million dollar homes of Hollywood film stars. Losses of $25 million made Bel-Air-Brentwood the fifth worst conflagration in the nation's history at that time.

some of which came 350 miles to Los Angeles. Still the flames raged unimpeded. Incoming companies that had never been in Bel-Air struggled in the mishmash of short, narrow streets to locate their assigned positions. Some got lost and had a difficult time turning around in the tight cul-de-sacs. Company officers feared their crews might be trapped in the thick smoke that turned daylight into darkness.

More than 300 police officers with bullhorns warned people to evacuate. Hundreds of residents fleeing down the streets became caught in the jam of fire apparatus trying to go up. School buses hurried into the area to evacuate children. Aid stations were set up where families were reunited. The miracle of the disaster was that not a single life was lost in the fire. At least 200 firefighters suffered injuries, mostly eye irritations from wind-blown debris.

As fast as fire engines took up positions, the wind-driven smoke and flames bulled them back to new spots. Pumpers throbbed for hours as hundreds of engines sent as much as 50,000-gallons-of-water-per-minute surging through hoselines snaking along streets. Total firefighting usage was 77,500,000 gallons. Panic-stricken residents turned on their lawn sprinklers and water taps and sprayed their roofs with garden hoses. This created an additional draw upon water. That, plus broken service lines in destroyed houses, stripped some areas of both water and pressure. Hydrants went dry and firefighters were largely unable to draft from most of the hundreds of swimming pools in Bel-Air because they could not get their apparatus close to them.

Bulldozers meanwhile continued to slash firebreaks and clear thick brush from around threatened areas. They worked in tandem with a fleet of more than a dozen air tankers. A team of 45 city, county and Air Force firefighters at Van Nuys Airport mixed and loaded the 125 tons of borate that would be dropped on the fire.

None of these efforts checked the rampaging flames. Raging totally unchecked, they slashed a jagged southwesterly course through Bel-Air. Driven by the Santa Anas, they then moved easterly toward thickly-built Beverly Glen Canyon. While bulldozer blades widened firebreaks, 22 city and county fire engines quickly formed skirmish lines to protect Beverly Glen's expensive homes. With the aid of borate bombers, the fire's easterly stampede was halted, but not before a new peril occurred.

Far to the east of firefighters, a man threw a burning road flare into thick brush at Benedict Canyon Boulevard near Wanda Park Drive and touched off a new and similarly-fast-spreading fire. Air tanker pilots spotted it and plastered the blaze with borate while three engine companies completely surrounded it. The arsonist was arrested. He said he liked to watch brush fires and had become so excited by the Bel-Air holocaust that he decided to start a new one.

With the eastward spread blocked and the open expanse of the Bel-Air Country Club promising to stop the southwesterly onslaught toward the UCLA campus, the situation began to improve on the flanks. It was a different story on the southwest perimeter. By noon, flames continued to race out of control with no hope for containment. The Santa Ana-goaded flames stormed into Hog Canyon and moved toward Sepulveda Boulevard on the westerly boundary of Bel-Air.

Firefighters were confident that the San Diego Freeway that was under construction through Sepulveda Pass would provide a quarter-of-a mile wide firebreak which surely would stop the fire from slopping into Brentwood. Shortly after noon, the winds blew a blizzard of burning brush and shingles across the freeway and peppered the thick brush on the Brentwood slopes of Sepulveda Canyon.

Even as firefighters watched in total disbelief, the mountainside twinkled like a Christmas tree as dozens of spot fires crackled in the wind-dried, pre-heated brush. If Brentwood went, the fire could continue unchecked clear across the Santa Monica Mountains and never stop until it reached the Pacific Ocean. Although he had hundreds of companies at his command, Miller could hardly spare any for this new outbreak. He had no alternative. The chief engineer began pulling engines out of Bel-Air and directed them west on Sunset Boulevard to

THE COLLECTION OF REAMES RAINEY

Former military bombers, carrying fire-retardant borate solution, made many drops in attempts to check the Bel-Air-Brentwood flames which spread with incredible speed.

Brentwood's winding streets leading up into the fire area.

More bad news came within the hour. At 12:56 p.m., the Topanga fire tower lookout reported, "Fire at 47 degrees! On Mulholland, east of Topanga Canyon Boulevard." The fire was in Santa Ynez Canyon, seven miles west of Bel-Air, and moving fast in even thicker brush to connect with the Bel-Air-Brentwood fire. Now there were two major brush fires catastrophically burning inside Los Angeles.

In Brentwood, the devilish winds swept flames south towards the $10 million campus of Mount St. Mary's College. Apparatus was quickly-deployed to protect buildings. Firefighters found hydrants were dry because of the tremendous drain on the system. The nuns' quarters and the fine arts building ignited, although their roofs were of tile. Thousands of birds' nests created from bits of brush had been built in the narrow space between the tile and the wood-sheeting of the roof. Burning brush and shingle firebrands were driven under the tiles by the gale-like winds. As the two buildings burned, a dozen 5000 gallon water tank trucks from the freeway construction project brought water to save the rest of the campus.

Flames hurtling Mount St. Mary's spilled into Brentwood's residential areas where dozens of fires erupted on still more wooden roofs. Brentwood was a reprise of Bel-Air. Former Vice President Richard M. Nixon watered down the wooden roof of his home with a garden hose. It did not burn. Hundreds of others were not as fortunate. Burt Lancaster's $400,000 mansion was destroyed. Zsa Zsa Gabor hurried home from New York to find the ashes of her magnificent home. Fred MacMurray evacuated his wife, Actress June Haver, and returned to help firefighters battle flames threatening their home. Most of it was saved.

Comedian Joe E. Brown lost half-a-century of personal mementos of his show business career when flames leveled his North Bundy Drive home. Maureen O'Hara was nearly trapped by flames, but stayed to douse embers landing on the wood roof of her home while a neighbor's house was destroyed. ***LIFE*** Magazine called the Bel-Air-Brentwood disaster, "A Tragedy Trimmed in Mink."

Flames, meanwhile, continued to capriciously leap from street to street, leaving in their wake ashes and tall chimneys where $200,000 homes had stood. About 2:30 that afternoon, the westward-rolling flames spilled into Kenter Canyon and continued their devastation. Half-an-hour-later, the firefighters' luck finally changed. The Santa Anas waned and the fury of the fire slowly diminished. The last house was destroyed at 2 p.m. The Santa Ynez fire was contained the next day after destroying nine structures and 9720 acres. It burned to within less than a mile of the Bel-Air-Brentwood fire.

Within six hours, more than 484 homes and 21 other structures were destroyed inside a 19-mile perimeter of Bel-Air and Brentwood. Together, the fires consumed 15,810 acres — more than was lost in all of Los Angeles' brush fires during the preceding decade. Losses of $25 million — the worst in the city's history — also made the conflagration rank fifth in damage at that time in American history. Firefighters could take some consolation in the fact that 78 percent of the homes inside the disaster area were saved.

In the wake of the conflagration, new laws required cutting back of brush from around houses. Residents were encouraged to plant green belts of fire-resistant ground cover. But the wood-shingle roof problem continued to fester. Fire Stations 97, 99, 108 and 109 were built along Mulholland Drive and water supplies were improved. Battalion 17 was created and stationed at Fire Station 99. The battalion's first alarm district included all of the brushlands west of the Cahuenga Pass to the western city limits and from Ventura Boulevard on the north to Sunset Boulevard on the south. Starting August 1, 1962, alarms inside the mountain fire district resulted in an initial double dispatch of extra companies. That double response procedure was soon extended to other brush areas in the city.

Thick chaparral, among the most highly-flammable ground cover in the world, had not burned for many years. Sweeping uncontrolled up inaccessible canyons, flames quickly invaded and destroyed hundreds of homes in Bel-Air and Brentwood.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF PAUL DITZEL

While brushland protection was being improved, the need for it was shown by a growing incidence of fires. At 11:45 p.m., January 14, 1962, Mountain Patrol and other units were dispatched by the Van Nuys Signal Office to 1720 San Ysidro Drive where a faulty furnace was filling a house with smoke. Mountain Patrol 2's 1000-gallon tank wagon responded south on Summitridge Drive to where it intersected with San Ysidro. Following the wagon was a Mountain Patrol pickup truck with a booster tank and hose.

Arriving on San Ysidro, firefighters discovered the pickup truck was missing. After a long search in the darkness, the apparatus was found at the bottom of a deep gully, 100-feet south of Oak Pass Road (High Ridge Drive). The rig had failed to make a sharp turn at that point and plunged hundreds of feet into the gully. Mountain Patrolman Reginald D. Duffin, 36, was found, seriously injured, 250-feet down the embankment. Twenty-five feet beneath him lay the body of Mountain Patrolman Robert L. Gillies, 44. He was the only patrolman to lose his life in the line of duty, despite the high hazard of their assignments in the treacherous terrain of the tinder-dry brush.

Far removed from the mountainous brushlands was the to-

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

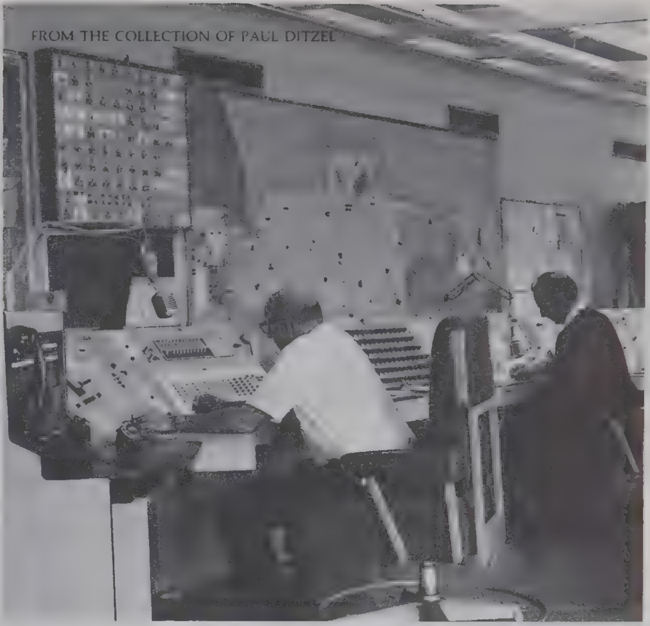
Inspector Robert L. Gillies
Mountain Patrol
Died of injuries when his apparatus
plunged into a gully
January 14, 1962

ally different environment of Los Angeles Harbor where, on February 22, 1962, a flotilla of boats welcomed the arrival of the LAFD's new Fireboat 4. Fireboats 1, 2 and 3, their turrets spraying arcing water welcomes, plus dozens of small craft were in the parade up the Main Channel. Vessels at berth hooted their whistles and the shores were lined with thousands in a civic celebration unlike any seen in recent years in the harbor.

Aboard the new boat, as its guns spouted fountains of water, was Assistant Chief Bethel F. Gifford, a waterfront fire authorty, who had begun research on this one-of-a-kind fireboat protection eight years earlier. Most fireboats are designed by naval architects with no firefighting experience. The result is a conventional boat adapted for fire protection. Gifford developed a boat blending modern firefighting considerations and prioritizing them over traditional naval architecture. Boat 4, herefore, differs from old fireboats as a catamaran does from a clipper ship.

Built at a cost of $639,000 at the Albina Engine and Machine Works, Portland, Oregon, Gifford closely supervised construcion and earned the dubious privilege of bringing the boat to Los Angeles. It was a rough voyage. "This was one of the wildest boat rides I have ever experienced," said Gifford. "As we were passing Astoria (Oregon) in high seas and foul weather, we experienced 15-to-20 foot waves. I decided then and there hat if we got through this, the boat was capable of anything. We made it (to Los Angeles) in eight days and two stops." Engineer Sam Ledoux, who accompanied him, agreed.

On July 28, 1967, the LAFD took delivery of the first two of three 34-foot-long speedy fireboats which were ideally-suited for rescue incidents and firefighting in the harbor's rapidly-growing small boat marinas.



FROM THE COLLECTION OF PAUL DITZEL

The Coldwater Signal Office on Mulholland Drive near Coldwater Canyon Boulevard, opened February 27, 1963. It served 56 stations covering a 300-square-mile area including the San Fernando Valley, West Los Angeles, Westchester and Los Angeles International Airport.

Boat 4's pumping capacity is rated at 9000-gallons-per-minute through five guns and six bulwark-mounted rail nozzles on each side. The diesel-powered boat with a welded steel hull, has two propulsion and four pumping engines and can attain a top speed of about 14-miles-per-hour. Forward of the engine room is a 550-gallon foam solution tank which is connected by piping to a bank of above-deck outlets. The foam compound, mixed with water, can produce 240,000 gallons of expanded foam: a supply sufficient for up to 40 minutes of firefighting.

Exceptionally maneuverable, Boat 4 can virtually move in a square-box-shaped pattern. Its twin-screw, controllable-pitch propellers carry it forward. Reversing the propellers' pitch enables the boat to move backwards. Side-to-side movement is accomplished by means of four jet nozzles located at the box and the stern on port and starboard sides. When Boat 4 pumps water through these nozzles, the streams shoot about eight-feet from the side of the boat and into the water. By manipulating the four jet streams from the pilothouse, the fireboat's pilot can turn the boat in a complete circle in a space less than the craft's 76.5-foot-length.

An historic problem of other fireboats is the back thrust from the water pressure of the guns which tends to push the boats away from the fire. Traditional boats compensate for this back pressure by directing other streams into the water in a direction opposite the one in which the firefighting guns are pointed. Boat 4 solves the problem by simply operating its jet nozzles. On Fire Service Day, 1965, Fireboats 1, 2 and 4 were rechristened in honor of the memories of the chiefs who were largely responsible for them. Boat 1 became the *Archibald J. Eley,* Boat 2 the *Ralph J. Scott,* and Boat 4 the *Bethel F. Gifford.*

Aging Boat 3 was soon to be decommissioned and sold shortly after July 28, 1967, when the LAFD took delivery of the first two of three 34-foot-long fireboats ideally-suited for rescue incidents and firefighting in the rapidly-growing harbor small boat marinas. These feisty boats can attain a speed of around 30-miles-per-hour — about twice that of the larger fireboats — without creating potentially dangerous wakes that could damage marina-berthed boats.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF JIM PERRY

The LAFD put its first helicopter in service, April 22, 1962, when it acquired this Bell Model 47-G3B. The helicopter could remain airborne for three hours and was retrofitted by the LAFD with a 105-gallon tank for dropping water or fire retardant chemicals.

Designated Boats 3 and 5, they were built in Oxnard, California, by Drakecraft. With fiberglass-over wood hulls, they have three engines, two propellers and a 750-gallon-per-minute pump. A similar quick-attack boat of the same size and capabilities was accepted into the fleet on September 25, 1968, and designated Fireboat 1, replacing the *Archibald J. Eley*. A feature of the three small boats is a platform that facilitates SCUBA firefighters entering and leaving the water.

Two months after Boat 4 joined the fleet, the LAFD put its first helicopter into service on April 22, 1962. The Bell Model 47-G3B was a three-seater with a 260-horsepower Lycoming six-cylinder engine equipped with a turbocharger. The helicopter was 43-feet-long and could remain airborne for nearly three hours. Built in Fort Worth, Texas, the ship was equipped by the LAFD with a 105-gallon tank for dropping water or fire retardant chemicals.

This first helicopter was flown to Los Angeles by two of the department's first three helicopter pilots, Firefighters Theodore "Bud" Nelson and Clarence Ritchey. The third of the LAFD's initial roster of helicopter pilots was Auto Fireman Beverly Beckley. All had extensive flight experience in military and civilian rotary and fixed-wing aircraft. The LAFD helicopter's first brush fire call came May 18, 1962, to La Tuna Canyon. The craft was destroyed during a training flight, June 23, 1974. Firefighters Edward L. Hill, 39, and Harold L. Radcliffe, 37, were killed when the helicopter struck telephone lines in Big Tujunga Canyon and crashed.

The department started its helitak program in 1963 and trained firefighters to jump from helicopters hovering about 12 feet over otherwise inaccessible brush areas. Helitak firefighters use tools to begin cutting firebreaks. As the program grew, helitak firefighters became invaluable in quickly bringing emergency aid to victims of falls and other incidents in terrain difficult or impossible to reach by conventional methods. Today's helitak firefighters are lowered into these areas by helicopter touchdown, hoists or by rappelling.

By the time the LAFD was celebrating its 100th birthday, its helicopter fleet had grown to seven; the largest operated by any fire department in the world. All helicopters have water-dropping capabilities ranging from 100-to 350-gallons per drop. During brush firefighting operations, the helicopters frequently form a line: While one helicopter is making a water drop, others are awaiting to come in behind to make their drops, while the rest of the fleet is either returning for more water or on the ground taking aboard new loads at pre-designated helispots where ample water is available. Four of the helicopters are equipped to serve as air ambulances.

A helicopter is ideally-suited for aerial reconnaissance except, of course, when grounded by fog. On the night of Friday, December 14, 1962, thick fog wrapped itself like cotton around a tight cluster of North Hollywood frame dwellings, apartment houses and small manufacturing occupancies in an area including Laurel Canyon Boulevard on the west, Radford Avenue on the east, Vose Street on the north and Hart Street on the south.

The first hint of imminent disaster came from the Lockheed Air Terminal (Burbank Airport) control tower which was, shortly after 10 p.m., guiding the three-member crew of a Flying Tigers' Lockheed Super H Constellation with two passengers, 40 tons of cargo and 600 gallons of fuel, on a final, instrument landing approach to Runway 7. The Constellation was two miles out when it suddenly disappeared from radar. The tower immediately sent Lockheed's two crash rigs, engine, foam and service unit out onto the field to search for the aircraft.

Moments before that, Captain John A. Conlin and firefighters of Engine 89 were jolted by a tremendous crash near the fire station on Laurel Canyon. That station's lights went out and the firephone went dead. Engine 89 pulled out of quarters and firefighters saw an orange-like glow in the pea soup fog half a block south and east of the station. The Van

Collapse of Baldwin Hills Reservoir (upper right) on December 14, 1963, sent a destructive tidal wave of water and mud cascading down Cloverdale Avenue. The flood destroyed or damaged 123 homes and 670 apartment units. Although eight persons were drowned, the toll would have been much higher, except for the rescue and evacuation work of the LAFD, the Los Angeles Police Department and other organizations.

uys Signal Office had, by then, received a telephone report of plane crash at 12205 Vose Street.

At 10:16 p.m., while Van Nuys was dispatching Engines 89,) and 39, Trucks 60 and 39, Rescue 60 and Battalion 14 Chief eil R. McCullom, Engine 89's captain radioed for a second arm. Three minutes later Conlin called for two additional gines.

Thick fog made it impossible to determine the perimeter of e fire and the number and location of the structures burning. ad it lifted momentarily, firefighters would have seen that e cargo plane had slammed down just east of Laurel Canyon nd skidded 1000-feet while carving nearly a block-long swath death and destruction which killed eight persons, including l aboard the aircraft. Destroyed or damaged were 29 strucres. Back ends of the houses were sheered off. Falling power nes and resulting sparks ignited the aircraft's spilled fuel.

Among those killed was a 16-year-old woman in one of the ouses. She was preparing for a Saturday night date. Other ouses were pushed off their foundations. Garages were fully-volved. The Constellation had plowed into and whacked off e rear of the 80-by-130-foot single-story brick machine shop Retco, Inc., 12016 Vose Street, where two workers were illed. The Retco impact caused the Constellation to disinterate. A cartwheeling wing vaulted Vose Street, slammed down nd ignited a truck loaded with furniture. The plane's fuselage topped just short of a 100-unit apartment building at 11931 lart Street.

Fog prevented firefighters from immediately determining the full scope of the disaster even as flames soared from the fully-involved Retco building. McCullom, after calling for more companies, told his driver, Harry Parker, to go down Vose Street and, with a handie-talkie, radio a description of conditions as he found them. From this information, McCullom quickly sketched the perimeter of the fireground and directed incoming companies to take positions where Parker found houses and other structures aflame. Truck 39's ladder pipe attacked the Retco fire, while Lockheed's crash rigs arrived and began a foam attack on what could be seen of the main pieces of wreckage.

One of the most bizarre disasters in the LAFD's history was not without its good fortune. Captain Fred A. Roberts was in charge of a class of 36 rookies at Fire Station 89's training facility. The rookies provided badly-needed manpower in the stricken area. The teamwork between McCullom and Parker enabled the chief to radio-direct the eventual total of 20 incoming companies to where they could best be deployed. The fog did not lift until daybreak when the area of destruction was fully-revealed.

Meanwhile, under Deputy Chief Hibbard's direction, the department was racing to accomplish its multi-faceted program to maximize its credit points, pending the imminent arrival, February 20, 1963, of a six-man National Board of Fire Underwriters inspection team. They would begin the long and detailed study of Los Angeles' fire protection and related resources which would ultimately determine if the LAFD would

LAFD PHOTO

Truck 60 firefighters under Capt. Stanley Borden helped in the rescue f six workers overcome by carbon monoxide gas, March 15, 1962, inside the bunker of an 82-foot-tall cement mixing products plant of Red-E-Crete, Inc., 8401 Tujunga Avenue, Sun Valley.

Highlight of Fire Service Day, May 7, 1960, was Assistant Chief Forrest W. Moore at the reins of a horse-drawn Amoskeag steamer at old Fire Station 9, 916 South Santee Street.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF LARRY HOERNER

retain its Class 1 rating. By June 30, 1963 an additional 822 new hydrants were in place.

One week after the inspection team's arrival, the department on February 27, 1963, opened its new Coldwater Signal Office at 12520 Mulholland Drive, near Coldwater Canyon Boulevard. The old West Los Angeles Signal Office was closed that day and alarms were automatically transferred to Coldwater. On March 5, 1963, operation of the Van Nuys Signal Office similarly was switched over to the $170,000 Coldwater alarm center.

Coldwater served 56 stations covering an area of 300 square miles, including the entire San Fernando Valley, West Los Angeles, Westchester and the Los Angeles International Airport. The 6000-square-foot alarm office initially broadcast from three transmitters located on Mount Briarcrest near Coldwater Canyon, Mountain Patrol 1 headquarters and atop Fire Station 63 in Venice.

Coldwater was, of course, linked to Westlake and featured a master push-button control panel with individual private telephone lines to each station in its coverage area. The system, with the help of microwave, enabled Coldwater dispatchers to simultaneously transmit an alarm and ring fire station extension bells, turn on station lights, broadcast the location of the alarm over station public address systems, and operate firehouse teletype machines.

Until Saturday afternoon, December 14, 1963, few people had ever heard of or seen a reservoir with its millions of gallons of water contained by an old dam atop Baldwin Hills in the Crenshaw district. Streets were filled with Christmas shoppers hurrying to malls when, at 1:55 p.m., Westlake sent Battalion 3 Chief William B. Nash to investigate reports of flooding and debris at La Brea Avenue and Coliseum Street.

Nash followed the trail of water up Cloverdale Avenue to the Baldwin Hills Reservoir where he discovered water flowing from a crack in the dam. The crack was worsening, as was the waterflow. It seemed only a matter of time before the dam collapsed and sent an enormous battering ram of water down Cloverdale.

From Nash's initial request at 2:07 p.m., for Engine 67 to standby at Rodeo Road and La Brea, the entire department quickly prepared for disaster. During the next hour, 26 companies and seven chief officers took up positions at the top and at the base of Baldwin Hills while police began evacuation of thousands of residents. Engineer Earle W. Leonard of the LAFD's hydrant office determined that water pressure had fallen so low over a large expanse of area, that fire protection was seriously jeopardized. Twenty tank wagons were dispatched to these low water pressure areas.

Westlake was, by now, becoming inundated with calls from worried residents of the Baldwin Hills area. Engine 11 was called to the alarm office and its firefighters helped to answer the telephones. Platoon Commander Forrest W. Moore called for the helicopter and Nash made an aerial reconnaissance. What he saw convinced him that time was running out. The dam was about to burst. Nash returned to the ground and the licopter flew to Fire Station 109 where it picked up Chief ngineer Miller.

Helicopter Pilot Bud Nelson, with the chief engineer on oard, was orbiting the break shortly after 3 p.m. "When we rived over the area there was a very large hole in the base of e dam — maybe six or eight feet across — and the flooding d already become a very serious problem," Nelson later called. "Cars were being pushed down the streets by the ater. Some had people in them and some were empty, but all ere out of control, bumping other cars, telephone poles, ouses and trees."

At 3:38 p.m., the Baldwin Hills dam collapsed and the entire ontents of the reservoir tidal-waved down Cloverdale so fast at the basin emptied in five minutes. "A huge wall of water me down the canyon below the dam, wiping out everything its path," said Nelson. "Houses were pushed from their undations and then into other houses. They became great asses of broken, twisted kindling riding the crest of the ging torrent, wiping out house after house."

Nelson got Miller's permission to attempt rescues of a man nd two women trapped on a garage roof. Landing Miller at the p-of-the-dam command post, Nelson swooped down into the ood-carved canyon that used to be Cloverdale Avenue. By en, Nelson's chosen garage roof landing spot had been ashed away.

"The part of the garage that still looked strong enough to nd on had trees on the north and east sides," said Nelson. The limbs hung over the garage just enough so there was not nough room for the rotor blades to clear. I decided to gamble s the water was getting about nine-feet-deep. I hovered in very lowly with my skids about one-to-two feet above the roof and started to clip the smaller lower branches with the rotor blades. I finally got a solid place for the skids."

Wagon 67 firefighters made numerous rescues of people who were trapped by flood waters when the Baldwin Hills Reservoir collapsed. Altogether, the many fire companies called to the disaster removed 2000 persons from a mile-square area inundated by the flood.

LAFD Helicopter Pilots Theodore "Bud" Nelson, Howard L. Payne and Ross Reynolds earned Medals of Valor for rescuing 18 flood victims following the December 14, 1963, collapse of the Baldwin Hills Reservoir.

While taking the wife and daughter on board the helicopter, the man called Nelson's attention to two elderly women who were up to their shoulders in mud and water while clinging to a patio wall beside an apartment next to the garage. Nelson quickly airlifted the two women to safety atop the dam site. He was joined by Helicopter Pilot Ross Reynolds, who accompanied him as an observer while returning to rescue the man.

As Nelson was flying the man to safety, Reynolds tied a lifeline around his waist and stumbled through deep mud and water to the elderly women. Upon Nelson's return, he landed the helicopter and, together, the pilots carried the women on board the craft. Reynolds remained behind as Nelson flew the women to safety. During the few minutes it took Nelson to return, Reynolds discovered two more flood victims trapped on an apartment house balcony.

Reynolds landed on the apartment house roof, while his observer, Helicopter Pilot Howard Payne, leaned over the edge of the roof to reach two infants who were handed up to him by a man on the balcony. The mother and another woman were helped to the roof and eventually all four were flown to safety. And so it went for the next few hours.

By 5:10 p.m., 18 flood victims had been rescued by the three helicopter pilots and flown to safety. At that time they saw a woman trapped in a second floor apartment window. The

NEWLY DECORATED

building was crumbling and only three walls remained. The only place Reynolds could land was on a sandbar surrounded by swiftly-moving floodwater. As Payne was rescuing the woman, a portion of the garages behind the helicopter collapsed.

A wave of water and debris rolled down onto the helicopter, struck the tail rotor blades and caused the rotor drive shaft to break. The centrifugal force of the main rotor system pitched the helicopter up, backward and spun it 180 degrees. Reynolds managed to right the helicopter which settled into the mud. Payne assisted the woman to safety on higher ground. The helicopter was dug out of the mud, repaired and flown back to Van Nuys Airport the next day.

In addition to the helicopter rescues, Deputy Chief Marvin E. Meador lauded the heroism of other firefighters who used lifelines and ladders while removing 2000 persons from the floodwaters which covered a mile-square area. The disaster zone was approximately bordered by Jefferson Boulevard on the north, La Brea on the east, Coliseum on the south and Ballona Creek on the west.

Meador singled out the efforts of firefighters from Engines 34, 43, 58, 61 and 67; Trucks 58 and 61; Squads 5, 22, 34, 58 and 61; Heavy Utilities 3 and 27 and Rescue Ambulances 60 and 100. Indicative of their work was Battalion 1 Chief Paul G. Morse's report showing that Engine and Truck 61, Squad 61 and Truck 58 rescued about 600 people from the roof of the Fedco Department Store, 5851 Rodeo Road, near La Brea, and an additional 1000 more from mud and water at the ground level around La Brea.

At one point, some 18 flood victims were counted aboard Heavy Utility 3 as Firefighter Jerome P. Tenhundfeld drove the apparatus out of the flooded area. Firefighters Jack Gordon of Engine 43 and Myron Present of Crash 95 were lowered into a 12-foot-deep water and mud-filled excavation where they recovered the body of Mrs. Hattie Schwartz, 73, who drowned when her automobile was swept into the hole. That only seven other persons drowned stood as a testimonial to the department's fast reaction to what it realized was an inevitable disaster. Destroyed or damaged were 123 dwellings and 670 apartment units.

Mayor Sam Yorty subsequently officially commended Chief Engineer Miller and 22 firefighters for their outstanding service in averting what could easily have been a catastrophic loss of life. Among those cited were Helicopter Pilots Nelson, Reynolds, and Payne, who each received Medals of Valor. Nelson was subsequently voted Outstanding Pilot of the Year by the Helicopter Association of America for his flying prowess during the disaster.

It had taken Miller many years to convince city officials to vote funds for a helicopter. The Baldwin Hills disaster for the first time demonstrated the heretofore unrealized versatilities of helicopters in myriad fire service applications. Not only was that point noted by many departments around the United States, but the City Council and mayor quickly approved funds for a second helicopter. On January 3, 1964, Helicopter 2 landed on the City Hall heliport and was officially accepted. The four-place Bell 47 J-2 was designed for use as an aerial command post and it, too, was destined to see frequent use in brush firefighting and rescues.

Members of the LAFD hoped, of course, that the NBFU

Pre-fire planning was credited with averting a catastrophic loss of life among sleeping tenants when an early morning fire, July 25, 1964, spread throughout the Dome Hotel. The once-resplendent five-story landmark at Second Street and Grand Avenue, atop Bunker Hill, was almost totally engulfed when first-in Fire Station 3 firefighters arrived. The 68-unit building was occupied by about 100 tenants, mostly pensioners.

Firefighters spotting an elderly man trapped in a third floor front window quickly raised a ladder. Firefighter Jack Knill of Engine 3 reached the man first and, with Firefighter Norman Bills of Engine 3, helped him onto the ladder.

The pensioner was safely brought to the ground. Although the old building, with its extensive wooden interior hallways and open stairs had been burning for a considerable time before the 7:05 a.m. first alarm, incredible rescue and evacuation efforts of firefighters held the death toll to three men. They were believed to be dead by the time the alarm was turned in. The Dome was the city's worst hotel fire since the March 25, 1952, St. George fire where seven guests perished.

PHOTOS BY G.E. LYONS AND FRANK MANWARREN/LAFD

graders would be impressed by their Herculean efforts at the Baldwin Hills Reservoir collapse. So, too, did they hope the race to retain their Class 1 title would be helped by the mid-June 1964, dedication of the LAFD's new supply and maintenance facility, built on the site of the old Corporation Yard at Avenue 19 and Pasadena Avenue.

Constructed for $1,618,163 from the 1959 fire department improvements bond issue, the shops represent the state-of-the-art in the fire service. The two-story, rectangular building covers more than four acres. Among its features are 18 stalls — 11 of them with twin-post hoists — for repairs of heavy duty apparatus, including pumpers. Two stalls can completely lift an aerial ladder truck. The facility was ideally laid out for maintenance and repairs of the LAFD's fleet of more than 600 pieces of equipment at that time.

Even before the shops began operating in August, 1964, Battalion 18 Chief Benjamin Renfro had started his pioneering efforts in planning for fighting fires in high-rise buildings. Skyscrapers of 30 stories or higher were beginning to etch Los Angeles' skyline; notably in the Aluminum Company of America's development of Century City. After a department committee spent two years evaluating the complexities of high-rise construction and fire protection, Renfro obtained the use of a Century City high-rise for fireground training experiments.

Operation High Rise started in July, 1964, with Renfro spearheading exercises which formulated fireground procedures against the inevitable day when Los Angeles would be confronted with major high-rise fires. Renfro's work was among the first of its kind in the United States where other fire departments were being challenged by the complexities of high-rise fires. Many departments utilized *Operation High Rise* procedures as a basis for developing their own plans.

By July, 1964, the NBFU had completed its evaluation of the LAFD. Their investigations took them into every fire station where they examined records, training and fire prevention activities. They questioned firefighters of all ranks and scrutinized every bureau section and unit at headquarters. The capabilities of the LAFD's apparatus fleet were closely evaluated.

Six months after they started their work, the NBFU announced in July, 1964, that the LAFD had won the great race. The department had retained its title as the only city of over 500,000 population in the United States with a Class 1 rating. The taste of victory became sweeter with the further announcement that improvements during Chief Engineer Miller's administration had slashed total deficiency points from 138 to the low 70's; an historic all-time low in NBFU history. There was even more good news for Hibbard, who had worked so hard with other city departments while coordinating the race. Improvements, other than in the fire department, enabled the NBFU to upgrade the city to a Class 2 rating.

Considering his work finished, Miller retired on July 16, 1965, and moved to Shelton, Washington. Administrative Deputy Chief Donald L. Hibbard, who said he did not wish to become a candidate for chief engineer, was named interim chief until Miller's successor was chosen. Hibbard served until April 25, 1966, when he, too, retired on the day that Raymond M. Hill was appointed chief engineer.

Nineteen persons died when flames swept up open stairways of the Ponet Square Hotel at Grand Avenue and Pico Boulevard shortly after 5 a.m., September 13, 1970.

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CHAPTER VIII

CHARCOAL ALLEYS AND TASK FORCES

One of the mysteries of American fire service history is the frequency with which disasters occur while the fire chief is vacationing or otherwise unavailable to lead firefighters. Of equal note is that the leadership void during those times is invariably filled by a deputy chief and firefighters who distinguish themselves while battling fires under stressful and other difficult conditions.

The most noteworthy of these accidents of history occurred April 18, 1906, when the nation's worst earthquake and resulting fires brought catastrophe to San Francisco. Fire Chief Dennis T. Sullivan was asleep in his firehouse when the quake hit at 5:13 a.m. The ornamental cupola of the next-door California Hotel fell onto the firehouse and collapsed the chief's apartment. Sullivan survived the collapse, but suffered fatal injuries when he fell through a hole while going to aid his wife. The job of leading San Francisco's firefighters, who had to battle hundreds of fires, fell to Sullivan's assistant chief, John "Leather Lungs" Dougherty, who successfully directed firefighters in stopping the onslaught of the flames.

Interim Chief Engineer Don Hibbard was vacationing on that Friday, the thirteenth day of August, 1965, which dawned hot and muggy as temperatures soared into the nineties. The acting chief engineer, Deputy Chief Raymond M. Hill, was growing increasingly alarmed. During the preceding two days, sporatic clashes between police and young blacks resulted after the drunk-driving arrest of Marquette Frye near his home close to the Watts district of south central Los Angeles, which was 95 percent black.

These clashes escalated as street gangs set at least a dozen fires, mostly with Molotov cocktails: bottles or milk cartons filled with gasoline or other flammable liquids. Firefighters and apparatus were pelted with rocks, bottles and other missiles while going to, extinguishing, or returning from fires. The worst of these incidents started at 9:50 p.m., August 12, when Engines 64 and 65, Truck 64 and Battalion 13 Chief Paul H. Augustine answered an alarm to three automobile fires at Imperial and Avalon Boulevards.

The fires were quickly extinguished, but not before Pump 65 came under gunfire from the jeering mob and was abandoned until police arrived. While returning to its Watts station, the two-piece engine company was deluged with bottles, cans, rocks, asphalt chunks, crowbars and angle irons. An Engine 65 firefighter suffered an ankle injury when struck by a can of beer. The windshields of both engines were shattered and body damage was severe. For safety, Engine 65 moved into Fire Station 64 with its two engines, truck company and Battalion 13 headquarters.

At 10:46 that night, Augustine led the same companies, plus Squad 57, to a fully-involved market at 115th Street and Avalon. Flying objects smashed Squad 57's windshield and broke the steering wheel while the company was responding to the fire. The mob harassed firefighters who knocked down the flames while being protected by a cordon of police. Augustine and Battalion 13 firefighters were again called out after midnight when, at 1:08 a.m., Friday, August 13, fire was touched off by Molotov cocktails lobbed into an auto parts store at 104th Street and Avalon. The building was destroyed.

From the air, the residential and commercial district of south central Los Angeles looked, by comparison with eastern slums, the least-likely setting for racial turmoil. Well-kept single-family homes with emerald lawns, flower gardens, trees and clean streets, largely predominated in the Watts area. The Urban League, a national organization dedicated to the economic advancement of blacks, listed Los Angeles first among 68 cities in its minority advantages.

But a ghetto does not have to look like a ghetto to be one. Population densities were nearly twice those elsewhere in Los Angeles. Invisible boundaries confined blacks to the south central area. Unemployment there was the city's highest as was the crime rate. Battalion 13 had more fires than any other battalion in the city. Older residents were mostly reconciled to their plight, but the young were not. They had their fill of political rhetoric and unfulfilled promises.

Their frustrations and deep-seated hatred were evidenced that Friday morning when Comedian Dick Gregory, a Congress of Racial Equality activist, addressed the mob and pleaded with them to go home. A rioter shot him in the thigh. The ghetto-lifestyle — and there was little hope of changing it — was joblessness, frequent trouble with the police, and hanging out on street corners while listening to portable radios. Their most popular radio station was KGFJ, whose well-known disc jockey, Magnificent Montague, exhorted listeners with his distinctive slogan, "Burn, baby, burn!" by which he meant, "Keep cool, brother, keep cool."

That Friday morning, Chief Hill called the police control center and was assured that fire apparatus would be escorted to alarms if officers were not busy with riot duty. That was not what Hill hoped to hear. With no guarantees of police protection; Hill called Augustine and told him to respond with his companies to the perimeters of alarms without using sirens or red lights, to minimize calling attention to themselves. They were instructed to wait for police. If escorts did not quickly arrive, the firefighters were to try to put out the fire. If attacked, the fire companies were to immediately leave. Captain Pete Jasich, head of the arson unit, would act as liaison officer with police.

Hill left headquarters to set up a command post at Fire Station 64, which was strategically-located inside the perimeter of potential riot-caused fires. There was plenty of room around the station to begin staging fire companies for use if the situation exploded. Hill's plan was to prepare for disaster by adapting an idea learned from the LAFD's brush firefighting experience. Implementing that plan, he ordered engines and truck companies to begin moving into the command post area where they were formed into task forces. Each task force consisted of at least two engine companies and an aerial ladder truck under command of a battalion chief.

If major fires started, these task forces would answer the alarms as a unit and work together as a team under the task force commander. The concept was not new. It had traditionally been used by European fire brigades, but only rarely by American departments which preferred the traditional system of sending individual companies from the nearest stations. Task forces were ideally-suited for riot firefighting. They provided greater security in numbers than separate companies coming from many directions. Too, task forces would be easier for police to escort.

Most of all, task forces offered quick, hard-hitting firepower. If there were many fires burning over a wide area, the tactics would be to quickly knock down the flames with large hoselines, wagon batteries and aerial ladder nozzles. For maximum safety, each task force would form a semicircle around the fire; hopefully drawing from only one hydrant and using as little hose as possible. There was to be no normal overhauling to douse the last embers. "Move in fast, knock the fire down in a hurry, pick up your lines and make yourselves available for another fire," Hill instructed.

*FURNITURE
*TELEVISION
*APPLIA

HE COLLECTION OF LARRY FORD

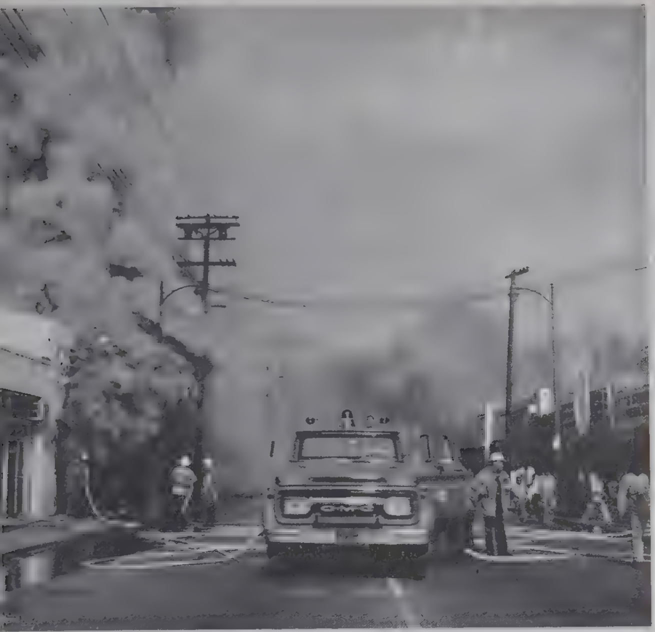
Most of the 261 buildings destroyed during the Watts riots in Los Angeles were furniture, liquor and clothing stores, as well as supermarkets. More than 180 LAFD firefighters were injured.

Friday morning was almost suspiciously quiet. By 1 p.m., some firefighters were becoming cautiously optimistic when only two automobile fires had been reported. All that ended at 1:09 p.m., as an alarm was sounded for a fire in a looted dry cleaning store at 107th Street and Avalon. Task force firefighters approached slowly while looking for police escorts. There were none. Bricks and rocks began bouncing off the hoods and sides of the apparatus. The firefighters returned to Station 64, but not for long.

By 1:20 p.m., fires were sprouting all along the 103rd Street business district of Watts. There were more blazes than one task force could handle. Four more were called. As task forces laid their lines and began attacking fires, there was the repeated sound of smashing plate glass, burglar alarms and the crowd chanting, "Burn, baby, burn!" giving Magnificent Montague's slogan quite a different meaning. Smoke shrouded the heavily-congested street as apparatus moved slowly to avoid hitting looters hurrying away with chairs, tables, cases of liquor, clothing, television sets and stereo consoles, sofas and mattresses. Police were hopelessly outnumbered.

As soon as a task force put out one fire, another blaze was taking hold — to their right, their left, behind them and for block-upon-block along 103rd. An enormous column of ugly smoke boiled high into the afternoon sky as, one by one, looted stores on both sides of 103rd went up in flames. The street was so destroyed by fire that a newscaster named it Charcoal Alley. At about this time, still more puffs of smoke were billowing for 11 blocks along Avalon between 103rd and 114th Streets. Molotov cocktails were igniting looted stores north of Slauson; over four miles from Charcoal Alley.

If it was the mob's pleasure to permit firefighters to attack the burning buildings, they did. The rioters mostly ruled that firefighting could not begin until buildings were thoroughly ransacked. Firefighters, therefore, could usually begin to attack a blaze only when it was well-started, or if the police were there to protect them. With so many companies committed to the



Stores on both sides of East 103rd Street were looted and torched by rioters, starting at 1:20 p.m., Friday the thirteenth day of August, 1965. The hub of the Watts business district was so devastated by fire that a newscaster dubbed it Charcoal Alley.

growing epidemic of riot fires, Hill ordered a partial recall of off-duty firefighters, split two-piece engine companies and activated reserve apparatus to provide protection for the rest of the city.

At 5 p.m., Acting Governor Glenn M. Anderson called out the California National Guard, but it would take hours before the vanguard of an eventual force of 13,500 arrived. Lootings and cocktail-bombings continued into the early evening. With still more fires pocking the area north of Watts, Hill at 8 p.m., set up a second staging area and command post at Fire Station 22, Vernon Avenue and Main Streets. Working in close coordination, the Station 64 command post directed dispatch of companies to fires south of Slauson and the command post at 22's oversaw operations north of Slauson.

Firefighters in staging at Station 22 saw rioters slug a service station attendant across the street from the firehouse and begin to fill bottles and cans with gasoline. There was no longer any question in anybody's mind. It was going to be a long, hot, difficult night. By 9 p.m., fires were in full bloom along Central Avenue, the area's main business thoroughfare. A steady crop of new fires were blossoming throughout the 32-square-mile riot zone. Looting, rioting and burning spilled across the city line and the Los Angeles County Fire Department would see its share of action that night, too.

At 10:30 p.m., task forces rushed to a major fire raging in a looted drug store, liquor store and the huge Shop-Rite Market at 120th Street and Central. Mobs of jeering rioters were restrained only by shotgun-carrying deputy sheriffs who guarded the hydrants. The three buildings were well-involved and more task forces were called. The deputies were soon summoned to a worse disturbance. Despite being without police protection, firefighters were too committed to pick up and leave. Rioters raced their cars up and down Central, tried to sever hoselines and skimmed their autos close to firefighters.

Rocks and bottles hurtling from out of the darkness pelted firefighters and their apparatus. The fire was controlled shortly after 1 a.m., August 15, and most of the crowd had gone on to set other fires. Firefighters were picking up their hose, preparatory to returning to staging or going to another fire, when the thick concrete front wall and marquee of the Shop-Rite Market toppled outward. The heavy slabs fell on Firefighters Warren E. Tilson and Robert Laxogue both of Engine 61. Rescuers immediately began probing the debris while the department's two heavy-duty wreckers with their jackhammers were special-called.

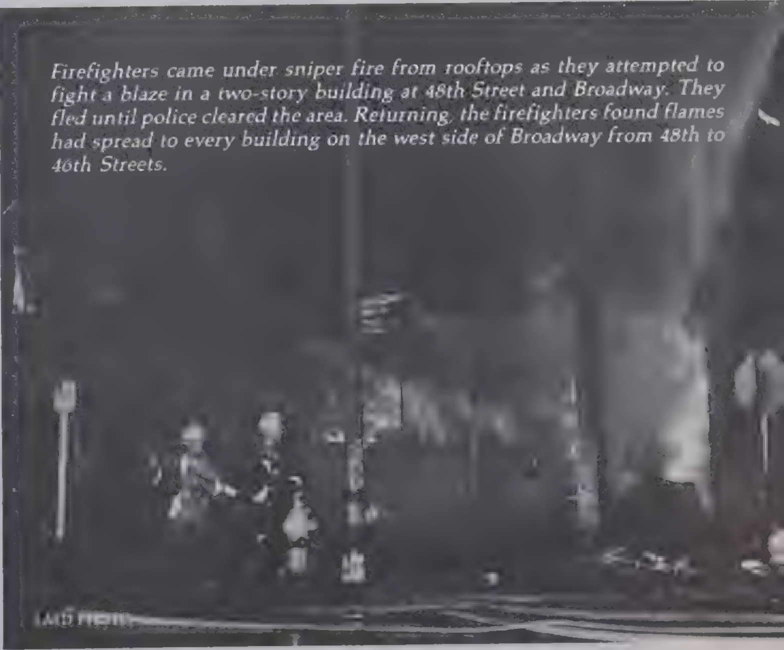
REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Firefighter Warren E. Tilson
Engine 61
Died from injuries suffered in collapse of marquee during Watts riots
August 15, 1965

Fearing that jackhammers could cause further injury — if indeed the two firefighters were still alive — jacks were used to slightly lift the slabs. Firefighters Malen W. Jacobs of Truck 28 and Frank J. Harrison, Jr., of Truck 3, lying completely prone, edged their way under the rubble. Laxogue, suffering broken ribs, was rescued. Tilson was dead: instantly killed when the concrete slab fell on him. Jacobs and Harrison were awarded Medals of Bravery for their heroism. Harrison became the LAFD's first black firefighter to win the medal.

Even while rescue efforts were underway at the Shop-Rite market collapse, looters swept into The White Front Department Store, 7651 South Central. The White Front was nearly a block-square and was one of the largest buildings in south central Los Angeles. The store was heavily-stocked with hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of television sets, stereos, appliances, liquor, dry goods and other merchandise; much of it flammable. After plundering the store, looters seeded it with Molotov cocktails.

The White Front store was ablaze and flames were casting a glare that could be seen for miles when the first task force



Firefighters came under sniper fire from rooftops as they attempted to fight a blaze in a two-story building at 48th Street and Broadway. They fled until police cleared the area. Returning, the firefighters found flames had spread to every building on the west side of Broadway from 48th to 46th Streets.

arrived and immediately radioed for help. An aerial ladder was raised and a firefighter began operating a ladder pipe which jetted a stream into the inferno. Suddenly, above the roar of the flames and the throbbing of pumpers, firefighters heard screams. Two looters were trapped inside. Firefighters rescued them by using a cutting torch to sever iron bars over a window. They pulled the looters out and handed them to police.

By midnight, still more fires were burning and others were being started. At the busy intersection of Broadway and Manchester Boulevard, seven stores were burning. At 1 a.m., Saturday, August 14, 45 task forces were hurrying from fire to fire, while constantly under attack by rioters. Los Angeles city and county firefighters were experiencing something unknown in the United States since the New York Draft Riots, July 13-to-14, 1863, during the War Between the States. Volunteer firefighters were at that time harassed and stoned for two days while fighting blazes set by mobs opposed to the war.

Chief Hill estimated, early Saturday morning, August 14, that more than 200 fires — most of them of greater alarm size — were burning. Command post dispatchers showed a backlog of as many as 20 fires waiting for available apparatus or police escorts. Shotgun-carrying officers rode apparatus and task forces followed National Guard jeeps mounted with machine guns. Dispatching priorities were given to fires where life hazards were great and to large structure blazes. Lowest priorities went to burning automobiles. Alarms from fireboxes were ignored because they were mostly false and were often pulled to lure firefighters into ambushes. By 7 a.m., the fire department had logged more than 1000 alarms during the preceding 24-hour period, including one which sent Squad 22 firefighters to deliver a baby in south central Los Angeles.

Dawn promised another day with 97-degree temperatures. Alarms dwindled during the morning hours. Firefighters began to hope the worst was over. It was not. By mid-morning that Saturday, rioters attacked with renewed fury. A gigantic Thrifty Drug Store at Washington Boulevard and Central was looted and firebombed. Mobs of rioters swarmed into commercial buildings lining Central and Broadway for 16 blocks. The frenzied looting was followed by the inevitable Molotov cocktails as building after building went up in flames and down in ashes. It was Charcoal Alley all over again, but this time larger buildings were involved and the fires blazed more furiously because of the interior fireload.

On Broadway near 48th Street, looters plundered the Friendly Furniture Store before splattering it with Molotov cocktails. The store blossomed into one of the most spectacular blazes of the day. The mobs cheered as the Friendly Furniture Store was destroyed, but other black residents living nearby wept as they sprinkled their wooden roofs with garden hoses to try to keep their homes from igniting. At 43rd and Central, looters picked the Shoppers Market clean, blew open the safe and escaped with all the cash before fire-bombing the $1 million supermarket.

Central from Santa Barbara Avenue to 49th Street was a maelstrom of teeming mobs scurrying among blazing buildings that sent towering columns of smoke billowing thousands of feet into the sky. Central Avenue became Charcoal Alley No. 2. Paralleling Central to the west was Broadway. There, 23 large commercial buildings were burning furiously and six more were catching fire. Broadway turned into Charcoal Alley No. 3.

From a helicopter over the area, James P. Bennett of the ***Los Angeles Herald-Examiner*** reported: "The whole scene looked like a crazy patchwork of hatred and devastation. Looters were . . . carrying their booty to cars past beleaguered firemen fighting fires in other shops . . . At least three firemen were observed from the air to go down under a barrage of rocks and bricks . . . Firemen were forced to abandon their efforts to put out the flames . . . In one case, several firemen tried to run to safety, leaving their equipment behind. Looters moved in and

LAFD PHOTO

During the height of the Watts riots, more than 200 fires, most of them of greater alarm size, were burning at one time. There was, moreover, a backlog of 20 more fires waiting for available apparatus or police protection. Reflective striping on firefighters' coats made them targets for snipers. Shotgun-carrying police guarded firefighters as they attacked the fires.

Raymond M. Hill served as chief engineer from April 25, 1966, until May 31, 1975.

removed hoses from the trucks and did a snake dance with them." Lou Mack, a photographer riding with Bennett, said, "It looks like all the fires of hell down there."

Although a 12-hour curfew was declared, beginning at 8 p.m., firefighters expected even worse trouble with nightfall as south central Los Angeles was silhouetted by the glare of dozens of fires. Around 10:30 p.m., a task force was attacked by gunfire from the rooftops as they attempted to fight flames in a two-story building at 48th Street and Broadway. Battalion 8 Chief Kenneth R. Long ordered his firefighters to leave. They returned after police and National Guardsmen swept the area. Long and his firefighters found that flames had by then spread to every building on the west side of Broadway from 48th to 46th Street.

Gunfire started again. A bullet narrowly missed a firefighter as Long's task force took cover beside their apparatus and near a concrete wall. A tear gas grenade thunked off a wall and landed near the firefighters. Spewing gas felled five firefighters who were hospitalized.

A massive pall of smoke shrouded south central Los Angeles at dawn, Sunday, August 15, as bone-weary and begrimed firefighters girded for a third day of rioting. There were many fires, including a rash of incidents in black areas of Pacoima, Venice, Long Beach and Pasadena. But the worst was over. Even as rioting and fires flickered out during the next two days, scores of attempts were made to explain the unexplainable. But nobody could. By Tuesday, Los Angeles was burying its dead. At Tilson's funeral service, LAFD Chaplain Robert Gaar said, "I would to God that we, as a people, white or black, could look at each other in the eyes and say, 'You are my brother.'"

Investigators, meanwhile, were tallying damages. Of the 261 buildings destroyed in the city, most were supermarkets, liquor, furniture and clothing stores. Damages exceeded $45 million and 34 were killed, including Tilson and a Los Angeles County deputy sheriff. Nearly 4000 people were arrested and over 2000 guns were confiscated. More than 180 LAFD firefighters were hurt; 32 of them injured by rioters. Watts was a foretaste of what awaited American firefighters during the turbulent 1960s. In 1967, firefighters battled riot-caused fires in 70 cities. On April 4, 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated in Memphis. Fierce flaming riots quickly erupted in Chicago, Washington, Detroit and Boston.

The fire commission's announcement, April 25, 1966, of Hill's appointment as chief engineer was almost anticlimatic. Although the LAFD had a depth of talent, there had, for years, been little question that Hill would one day become chief engineer. He had, of course, distinguished himself while directing fire suppression operations during the Watts riots. Before that, as the city's fire marshal and head of the fire prevention bureau, Hill directed *Operation School Burning.* He had, moreover, served as deputy chief in charge of supply and maintenance where his keen mind quickly grasped the complexities of apparatus and other fire department procurement requirements.

Born in Yuma, Arizona, October 14, 1914, Hill joined the Los Angeles Police Department, January 2, 1937, and served for more than three years as a patrol officer. On July 28, 1940, he resigned from the LAPD and the next day entered LAFD training. Initially assigned to Truck 3, Hill was promoted to engineer, August 6, 1946; to captain, April 16, 1947, and to battalion chief on April 5, 1954. During his firefighting career, he mostly served in West Los Angeles stations before his assignment to the fire prevention bureau, July 6, 1954, and was appointed deputy chief, June 18, 1956.

Hill brought other impressive credentials to the chief engineer's office. While a firefighter, Hill attended Los Angeles City College and, later, UCLA. In 1955, UCLA awarded him a bachelor of engineering science degree when he graduated with

FROM THE COLLECTION OF PAUL DITZEL

Fire, starting in 10th floor offices of the Commercial Exchange Building, 416 West Eighth Street at Olive Street, extended through heat-shattered windows to upper floors of the 13-story building on January 28, 1966. Truck 28 fully-extended its 100-foot metal aerial ladder and began an exterior attack. Inside, firefighters suffered intense heat and smoke punishment in an hours-long battle made worse by an inoperative water standpipe system.

highest honors. Hill was as well-known in the national fire service as he was in Los Angeles. At the time he became chief engineer, Hill was a member of the board of directors of the National Fire Protection Association and served on 15 of its technical committees. Hill was, moreover, the nation's only head of a fire department to have qualified for full membership in the Society of Fire Protection Engineers.

Among Hill's initial actions as chief engineer was to completely reorient the LAFD's traditional fire alarm response system. Experience learned from brush fires and reinforced during the Watts riots, convinced him that the task force concept was superior to dispatching the closest fire companies. On June 1, 1966, the first task force went in service at Fire Station 9.

This task force was known as a heavy duty task force because it consisted of three triple combination pumpers and an aerial ladder truck company. Eventually there were other heavy duty task forces formed in high-value districts in Los Angeles. As the system finally evolved, the task force concept jelled into two triple combination pumpers and a truck company. Later came the light force concept: a truck company and a triple combination pumper, but still running out of a task force station. Strategically located throughout the city, moreover, were single-piece triple combination pumpers.

In addition to this LAFD first, the early years of Hill's administration were marked by many others. Recognizing the value of public relations and cooperation with the media, Hill appointed Paul Ditzel as the LAFD's first civilian fire inspector on March 1, 1967. Ditzel's initial assignments of many that were to follow during succeeding chief engineers' administrations included the formation of a citizens advisory committee consisting of prominent Los Angeles area public relations executives.

Shortly after the committee's appointment, Hill named the department's first three public service officers, Fran Andrews, Jim Perry and Don Wallace, assigned to the A, B and C platoons, respectively. Among their duties was to assist the news media in covering LAFD activities. Through Hill, moreover, the Civil Service Department assigned Ditzel to grade the essay question in a deputy chief's exam.

Hill, acting under a little-known section of the Los Angeles Municipal Code, was authorized to appoint civilian fire inspectors as members of the LAFD and to issue them badges and LAFD identification cards.

During the following eight years, Hill issued fire inspectors' credentials to three fire buffs. Lester A. Fisher, appointed in March, 1969, is a former New Yorker and a member of the Fire Bell Club of New York. Fisher has been following LAFD activities since 1938, served as an oral examiner for an assistant chief's examination and holds LAFD Lifetime Fireline Pass No. 1.

Robert K. Tyler, named inspector in 1971, was an Automobile Club of Southern California official. Prior to his retirement to San Diego, Tyler's LAFD contributions included service on oral boards for entrance to the department, encouragement of business community support for fire department improvements and assistance at Fire Service Day open houses.

The third buff is Jeffrey M. Stern, holder of Lifetime Fireline Pass No. 2. Stern, named inspector in 1975, was active in Junior Chamber of Commerce assistance to the LAFD, at Medal of Valor luncheons and encouraged citizen CPR programs. Until 1983, Stern was a member of the Los Angeles County Fire Service Commission. The four inspectors' service is voluntary and without pay.

Hill's program for heightening public awareness of the department provided the springboard for an idea originating with the LAFD Fire Fighters Association. The group decided to annually select a Fireman of the Year. The LAFD's "Mr. Rescue" — Vincent Pratt — was voted the first Fireman of the Yea
and was presented with a citation at Fire Station 27 on Fir
Service Day, May 6, 1967.

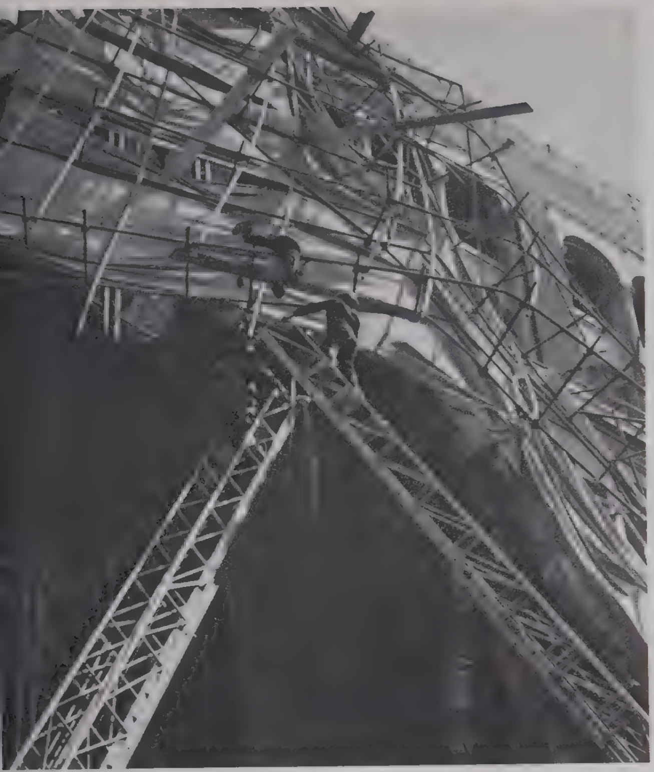
Chief Engineer Hill appointed Paul Ditzel (1) as the LAFD's first civilian fire inspector on March 1, 1967, and issued him Badge No. 82, after swearing him in as an unpaid member of the department. Chief Hill later appointed three more civilian fire inspectors: Lester A. Fisher (2), Robert J. Tyler (3), and Jeffrey M. Stern (4).

Pratt joined the LAFD on November 18, 1940, and spent 1
years at Fire Station 27. He developed a profound interest an
expertise in cardiac problems — for which he won man
awards. After 17 years at 27's, most of them assigned to Squa
27, Pratt was named Rescue-Ambulance Coordinator when th
LAFD started this service in the San Fernando Valley on July 1
1957. When Pratt retired in 1967, he had logged responses t
more than 21,000 rescue calls during his career.

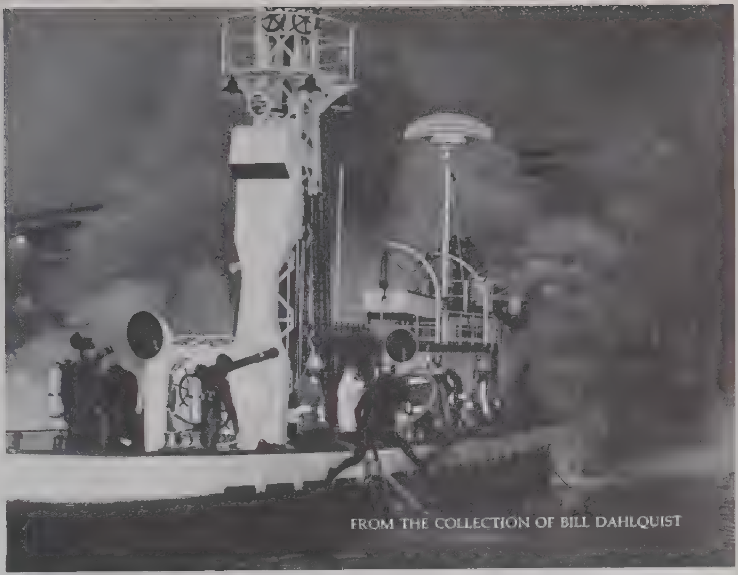
A month after Pratt was named the LAFD's first Fireman o
the Year, the department formed its first Fire Service Explore
Scouting Post No. 651. With Capt. Cecil McLinn of Engine 6
serving as advisor, the post was publicly introduced on June 3
1967, during the Scout-O-Rama at El Camino Junior College

Los Angeles' long-anticipated first major high-rise fire occurred at 9:55 p.m., December 10, 1967, when Westlake transmitted Box 1168 at Sixth and Flower Streets. First-due Engine
Truck and Salvage 28 firefighters were startled to see flame
spouting from the famous Eiffel-tower-like structure atop th
old 13-story Richfield Oil Building, 555 South Flower Stree
The four-sided tower, a landmark and navigational guide f
aircraft for 37 years, was faced on all sides with Richfield'
illuminated signs. The letters of the signs were of a flammabl
transparent acrylic plexiglass that was fiercely burning.

Utilizing procedures developed during *Operation High Ris*
Engine 28 loaded the standpipe system while firefighters carrying hosepacks rode elevators to the 12th floor. From ther
they had to climb a flight of stairs to the 13th floor penthous



Three workers plunged from the 11th floor level when scaffolding collapsed, August 12, 1967, during remodeling of the Frank Wiggins Trade School, just south of Fire Station 10 at 1335 South Olive Street. One worker was killed and another severely injured. The third worker was snagged by scaffolding at the seventh floor level. At 2:22 p.m., a passerby ran to Fire Station 10 for help and additional apparatus was quickly called. While firefighters stood ready with a safety net, the aerials of Trucks 9 and 10 were raised. Firefighters Frank Harrison, Jr., of Truck 10 (left) and Mitchell Flatos of Truck 9 (right) reached the worker and assisted him to the ground. He was not seriously injured.



FROM THE COLLECTION OF BILL DAHLQUIST

SCUBA firefighters got their baptism under fire, December 28, 1967, when they made about 40 sorties under the wharf at the Harbor Grain Terminal, Berth 174, Wilmington. The fire was confined to less than 40 feet of the dock.

roof. Atop the building was a four-story structure housing elevator and air conditioning machinery. That building was accessed by an offset, exterior stairway. From there it was a vertical climb up a 15-story steel ladder inside the tower to reach the uppermost parts of the burning signs.

With Engines 28 and 3 each operating at 275-pounds pump pressure, firefighters were supplied water through the standpipe system terminating on the roof. Handlines were attached to the standpipe outlets and stretched up the four flights of stairs to the base of the tower as burning chunks of sign rained upon the firefighters. Additional manpower was called at 10:11 p.m., and three more engines and a truck company responded. The LAFD helicopter was called in the event that hose and other equipment would have to be airlifted to the roof of the Richfield Building.

A temporary command post was set up at the base of the tower and fire attack teams were formed. Officers on the roof kept in handie-talkie radio contact with the command post on Flower Street. Firefighters wearing lifebelts climbed the vertical ladder and attacked the tower flames which were controlled by 11:15 p.m., with losses put at $63,000.

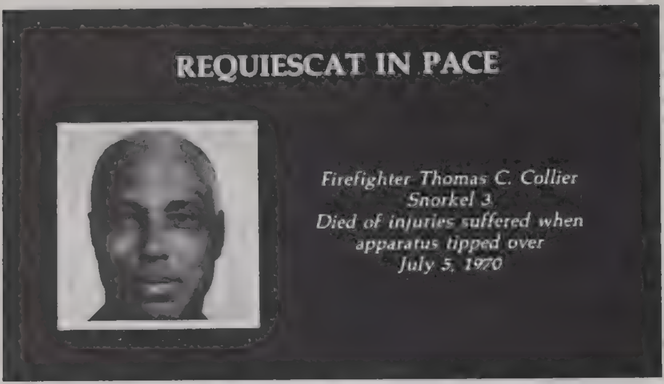
At 10:32 a.m., December 28, 1967, SCUBA firefighters got their first baptism under fire during an underwharf fire at Berth 174, the Harbor Grain Terminal. When land companies found firefighting access impossible, fireboat SCUBA divers made about 90 sorties under the wharf while an armada of 45 engines, five trucks, four fireboats and 15 special-purpose apparatus attacked the hot, smoky fire. Although about 3700 feet of wharf was endangered, firefighters confined the blaze to only about 400 feet. Many firefighters were overcome by smoke and SCUBA Firefighter Charles C. Hilzer suffered a torn knee ligament.

On February 1, 1968, the LAFD put its first Snorkel in service at Fire Station 3. The department, like many, was slow to adopt elevating platforms of this type which were first extensively used by the Chicago Fire Department, starting in 1958. The fire service debated the relative merits of elevating platforms compared to aerial ladders. The LAFD's first Snorkel was an 85-foot twin articulated-boom apparatus mounted on a Crown Firecoach chassis.

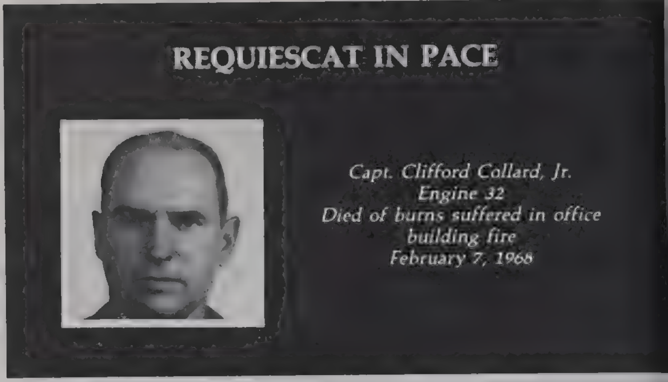
Snorkel 3 saw a relatively short service life. At 2 p.m., July 5, 1970, the apparatus was part of an assignment called to reports of smoke issuing from eighth-floor windows of the Lankershim Hotel, 710 South Broadway. While firefighters began an interior search for the source of the smoke — which was coming from a grease flue fire in The House of Wong restaurant adjoining the hotel — firefighters laid a supply line into Snorkel 3 as three firefighters climbed into the elevating platform's basket.

While the firefighters were being lifted in the basket and the Snorkel's booms were being extended, the apparatus suddenly toppled on its side. Capt. Hillis Baker and Firefighters James Denning and Thomas C. Collier, all of Snorkel 3, were thrown 50 feet to the street. Baker and Denning suffered multiple fractures. Collier, 57, a 28-year veteran of the department, died of his injuries at 4:20 p.m. Collier was the LAFD's first black firefighter killed in the line of duty. Baker never fully-recovered from his injuries.

A LAFD board of inquiry reported that "the primary cause was related to the right side ground jacks . . . It was determined . . . that the ground jacks on the right side had definitely been extended in some measure." The board was "not able to determine conclusively that both right side ground jacks were fully-extended and in a locked position at any time during the


REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Firefighter Thomas C. Collier
Snorkel 3
Died of injuries suffered when apparatus tipped over
July 5, 1970


REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Capt. Clifford Collard, Jr.
Engine 32
Died of burns suffered in office building fire
February 7, 1968

operation. Neither was the board "able to determine conclusively that both right side ground jacks were not fully-extended."

The LAFD's first black firefighter to be promoted to battalion chief was James H. Shern, who was appointed February 6, 1968. Shern who held a chemistry degree from Los Angeles City College and a bachelor of arts degree in physical science from California State University Los Angeles, is best-remembered for his work in the fire prevention bureau's research laboratory. Retiring in 1972, Shern became chief of the Pasadena, California, Fire Department and was later elected president of the International Association of Fire Chiefs.

Still another first during this period was the LAFD's paramedic rescue-ambulance service which started, July 29, 1968, at Fire Station 53 in the harbor. The department placed its first paramedic engine company in service at Fire Station 99 on December 10, 1979. The first engine company firefighter-paramedics were Clint Guthimiller, Stan Horst, John Kitchens, Dave Kober, Vince Marzo and Duane Reese. By the time the LAFD celebrated its 100th anniversary, the department was operating 49 paramedic rescue-ambulances, two paramedic engine companies and one ambulance staffed by emergency medical technicians.

The LAFD's fleet of mobile intensive care units is the largest in the world's fire service and annually answers in excess of 175,000 calls. On February 26, 1979, the United Paramedics of Los Angeles Association was formed and serves as the recognized representative organization for LAFD rescue-ambulance personnel.

Earlier in 1968, a fire in a Wilshire Boulevard office building had everlasting effects upon LAFD fireground operations in multistory occupancies. At 10:23 p.m., February 7, Engines 11, 13 and 32, Trucks 11 and 29, Salvage 32 and Battalion 11 Chief Vernon F. Braden were sent to a reported small fire on the third floor of the nine-story United States Borax & Chemical Corporation, 3075 Wilshire Boulevard at Virgil Avenue. From the outside, there was no evidence of smoke or fire. A security guard told firefighters there was a small rubbish fire on the third floor.

Firefighters took a fire extinguisher and rode elevators to the third floor where they found white smoke oozing from a small hole in the floor of a room near the elevator shaft. The fire, apparently inconsequential, was on the second floor. Braden told his aide, Robert L. Skemp, to radio Westlake that they had a small fire and that Engine and Truck 11 would handle it. The other companies were then ordered by Westlake to return to their quarters.

Braden, Skemp and Firefighter Gerald E. Babcock of Engine 11, along with a security guard, reentered the elevator and pushed the button to take them to the second floor. At the same time, Capt. Clifford Collard, Jr., 47, of Engine 32, along with Firefighters Richard B. Matthews and James A. Oliver, entered an adjacent elevator and a maintenance worker took them to the second floor, too.

When the elevator with Braden and the others stopped at the second floor, the inner door opened, but the outer door would not. Fire and smoke began seeping into the elevator from a free-burning fire that was rapidly-propagating in a lunch room and spreading along the second-floor corridor. They tried to push the button that would take them to the ground floor, but the elevator was inoperative. The emergency alarm system was not functioning, either. Their handie-talkie radio calls were not heard, nor were their screams for help.

The elevator carrying Collard and the others also stopped at the second floor. The doors automatically opened onto the free-burning fire and smoke which had banked down to about four feet above floor level. Matthews, Oliver and the maintenance worker fled along the smoke-filled corridor. Matthews and Oliver found an interior standpipe-supplied hoseline and began attacking the fire. They thought Collard had fled down a front stairway.

Firefighter Lee A. Powers of Engine 11 had, meanwhile entered the third elevator in the lobby and proceeded to the third floor. The doors would not open. Overcome by smoke, he was later rescued by Firefighter Bart P. Vlietstra of Engine 13 who, himself, collapsed from smoke inhalation after giving his breathing apparatus to Powers.

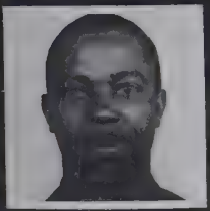
Salvage 32 was returning to quarters from the alarm when firefighters happened to glance backward, saw smoke pouring from ninth floor roof vents of the Borax Building, turned around and hurried back to the fire. Salvage 32 firefighters rescued a cleaning woman on the fifth floor and spread salvage covers on the first floor as the fire was quickly knocked down by other companies.

Truck 11 firefighters, using forcible entry tools, pried open the elevator doors to free Braden, Skemp, Babcock and the security guard. Shortly thereafter, as smoke and steam were clearing, Collard's body was found partially inside the burned elevator.

The Borax Building fire caused the department to review reinforce and improve upon its fireground procedures in multiple-story buildings. Notable among the many changes wa the policy of not using elevators, except under rare circumstances, until the location and nature of the fire problem wa fully-known. Access to upper floors was, thereafter, via stairways by firefighters with self-contained breathing apparatus Few of those who initially entered the Borax Building were wearing breathers. "The men in Battalion 11 consistently wea breathing apparatus whenever its need is indicated," reporte Braden. "I can only guess that (we were) lulled into a sense o false security because of the seemingly inconsequential natur of the fire."

Later that year, the department lost another member in th line of duty. At 7:05 p.m., November 25, 1968, Task Force 6 Engine 23 and Battalion 9 were called to a large house an attached garage fire at 1128 Donaire Way, Pacific Palisades

REQUIESCAT IN PACE



Firefighter Robert C. Gladden
Engine 69
Died of cardiac arrest at fire
November 25, 1968

refighter Robert C. Gladden of Engine 69 suffered a fatal art attack while overhauling the ruins. Gladden, 47, was a ember of the department for 21 years; 12 of them spent at ngine 69. Gladden was survived by his wife, Marie; a daugh- r, Laura; and a son, Robert, Jr., who later joined the LAFD. Irs. Marie Gladden was one of three persons who perished in Baldwin Hills brush fire which destroyed or damaged 71 omes, July 2, 1985. Robert Gladden, Jr., of Engine 82 was nong the firefighters who battled the $15 million blaze.

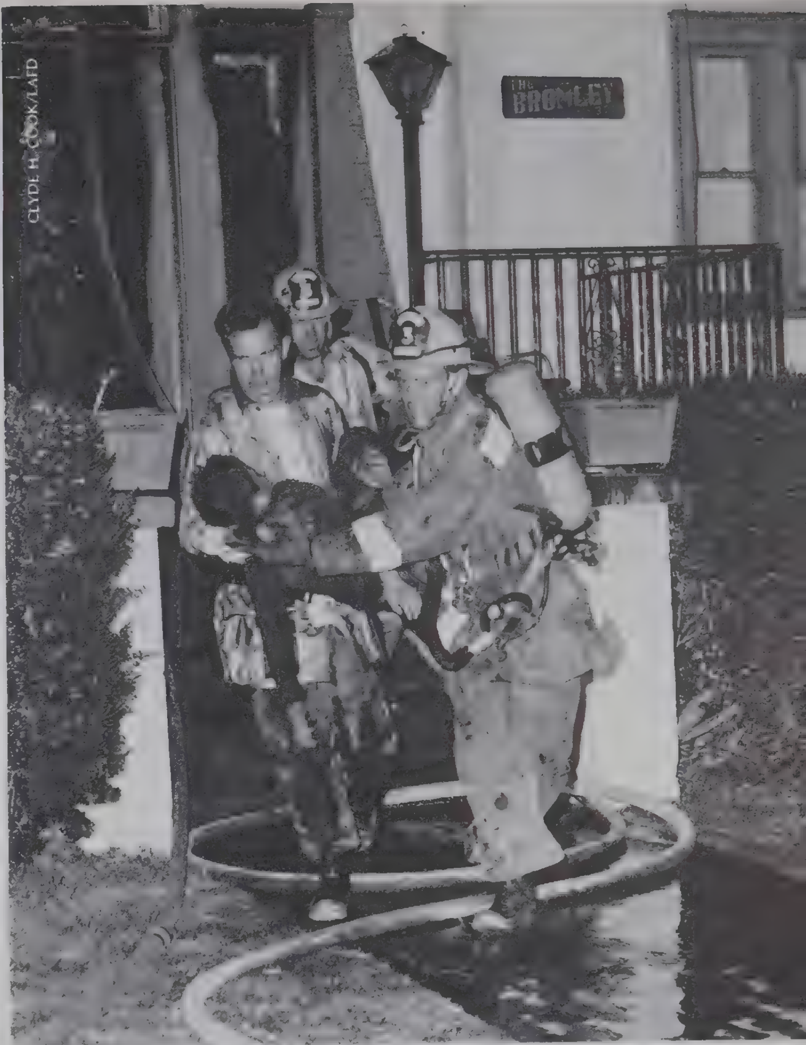
As the world entered the turbulent era of organized and dividual acts of terrorism, the LAFD learned that while these ere primarily law enforcement problems, fire department sources frequently played a vital role. The first indication of at occurred at 5:30 a.m., December 8, 1969, when police WAT teams, with three specially-assigned LAFD rescue-am- ulances standing by, simultaneously stormed three heavily- rtified Black Panther meeting places in south Los Angeles. wo of the hits went off with little incident.

At the Black Panther hangout at 4115½ South Central Ave- ue, SWAT team officers, with search and arrest warrants and attering rams approached the front door. Suddenly, three of e officers were felled by submachine gun and shotgun lasts. The SWAT team returned the fire with automatic weap- nry and tear gas. As the SWAT team laid down a heavy rotective barrage of hundreds of rounds of automatic gunfire, irefighters Lyle E. Hall and Patrick M. Murphy of Rescue 39 an across no-man's-land and rescued the wounded officers. Aedals of Valor were awarded to Hall and Murphy.

The LAFD was next involved in a major incident of this type n May 17, 1974, when police surrounded members of the ymbionese Liberation Army (SLA) in a residence at 1466 East 4th Street, west of Compton Avenue. Among those believed to e barricaded in the two-bedroom single-family frame house was Patty Hearst, who had been kidnapped by the SLA and was later seen actively participating in a San Francisco bank obbery.

At 4:30 p.m., that day, Battalion 8 Chief Willard H. Reifke egan staging apparatus well away from the building, which was surrounded by SWAT teams. Soon joined by Assistant Chief Willis R. Nelson, fire resources grew to Task Forces 10 nd 26, Engines 21 and 22 and Rescue-Ambulances 14, 15, 22, 66, 295, 34 and 289. Tear gas fired into the house touched off a laze that quickly engulfed the building and spread to the attic of an adjacent residence at 1462 East 54th Street. SLA members xchanged heavy gunfire with police SWAT teams and other fficers. The fusillade from the barricaded suspects slowly topped as flames leveled the small house.

Police ordered firefighters to hold back until they could be ertain there were no unexploded munitions in the building. There were none. Firefighters attacking with wagon batteries nd handlines quickly controlled the fires. Bodies of six SLA members were found in the ruins. Patty Hearst was not among hem.



CLYDE H. COOK/LAFD

Firefighters Dave Smith and Paul Fulton of Engine 3, along with Firefighter John White of Truck 3 (from left to right) rescue a child overcome by smoke during an early morning fire in the Bromley Apartments, 320 South Rampart Street. Eight persons, including three members of the youngster's family, perished in the incendiary blaze, October 12, 1969.

Barely three months after the SLA shootout, a homemade bomb exploded shortly after 8 a.m., August 6, 1974, near the Pan Am ticketing area in Satellite 2 at Los Angeles International Airport. Two persons were killed and at least 17 suffered injuries. At 8:13 a.m., Task Forces 80, 95 and 5, Rescue-Ambulances 5 and 295 and Battalion 4 Chief James "Odie" Clements were dispatched. There was no fire, but the numerous casualties required nine additional rescue-ambulances.

Rescue 5 set up a command post and Harbor General and County/USC hospitals sent triage teams which worked with LAFD firefighters and paramedics. Muharem Kurbegovic, 31, well-known to LAFD arson investigators as a suspect in a number of cases, was arrested. The suspect, dubbed the "Alphabet Bomber" because of his messages containing cryptic threats, was declared sane and ordered to stand trial. The Yugoslavian national was found guilty and sentenced to prison.

Shortly after 4:40 Sunday morning, October 12, 1969, Mrs. Jennie Chelestine Damiani, 53, a plump, grandmotherly seamstress, was leaving Al's Drug Store at Sixth and Rampart

Streets. She heard sirens and saw fire apparatus hurrying towards smoke pouring from an apartment building. Damiani started to walk to the fire in the three-story Bromley Apartments, 320 South Rampart Street. Maybe she would see her favorite firefighter friends from Fire Station 11. Jennie was intrigued by fire engines and spent much time talking to the firefighters who explained how the pumpers worked. She also liked to walk past the Westlake Signal Office, although she never went inside. Jennie seemed content to wave at the dispatchers who sometimes smiled and waved back.

As Jennie approached the fire she saw aerial ladders being extended to the roof while firefighters raised other ladders to rescue the dozens of tenants who lived in the Bromley. One of the rescues by Firefighters Dave Smith and Paul Fulton of Engine 3 and Firefighter John White of Truck 3, was captured on film by LAFD Photographer Clyde H. Cook. His picture of the three firefighters saving a child was to become one of the most frequently-reprinted photos in the department's history.

As Jennie approached the Bromley she changed her mind, suddenly turned around and began walking to her apartment. Along the way she tried many automobile door handles. Finding a 1957 Chevrolet sedan unlocked at Sixth Street and Coronado Avenue, Jennie, who neither smoked nor drank, found a book of matches inside the car and set it on fire. Westlake got the alarm at 5 a.m. Jennie meanwhile continued to her apartment which was filled with religious objects and a painting of Westlake. While undressing, preparatory to going to bed, Jennie removed a wallet and a small gun she always carried in her brassiere and set them on a table.

Arson Investigator Del Winter quickly arrived at the Bromley. Firefighters had controlled the fire, which swept from the basement up an open stairway and spread death and injury along all three floors. Eight persons were killed, including two children and their parents. The Bromley was the worst life-loss fire in an occupancy of that type in the city's history at that time. Every fire leaves its fingerprints and Winter looked for them. He traced the origin of the fire to a sofa in the basement.

CLYDE H. COOK/LAFD

Firefighters successfully resuscitate youngster overcome by smoke during the early morning, October 12, 1969, fire at the Bromley Apartments.

Firefighter Thomas C. Collier of Snorkel 3 was fatally injured, July 5 1970, when the 85-foot elevating platform toppled while its boom were being extended. Capt. Hillis Baker and Firefighter James Denning, also of Snorkel 3, suffered multiple fractures. The Snorkel wa being raised following reports of smoke issuing from eighth-floo windows of the Lankershim Hotel, 710 South Broadway.

The rapidity with which the sofa ignited and spread smoke an fire throughout the building told him this was no case of blaze caused by a smoldering cigaret. A thorough investigatio quickly confirmed that the fire was incendiary.

Arson fires in that Westlake area had been a three-yea problem. Winter, assigned as chief investigator of them, ha records of around 500 incendiary fires in the district; most o them car fires, rubbish bins and palm trees. Were these relatively trifling fires and the disaster at the Bromley related?

Capt. William McDaniel, Winter and the other members o the arson unit had no lack of suspects. They included a janito living near the Bromley. There had been arson fires in hi building and each time he had them out before the departmen arrived. Also high on the list of suspects was a LAPD office whose record showed that he had been disciplined after h angrily fired his service revolver at a motorist who cut him of The officer, while off-duty, was frequently seen in bars in th Westlake area shortly before fires broke out. Arson investigators and LAPD internal affairs officers kept him under surveillance. And then there were vague reports of another suspect: plump, grandmotherly-appearing woman seen around automobiles just before they burst into flames.

As the Bromley investigation broadened with dozens of interviews, stakeouts and early morning cruising of the area b arson investigators, a 2:33 a.m. alarm, December 9, 1969, calle firefighters to a well-involved three-story vacant building a 975 South Hoover Street in the Westlake area. Firefighter discovered the body of Ermino R. Padilla, 46, in a third-floo closet where the transient fled while attempting to escape th fire which was found to have been set on the first floor.

With nine-arson-homicides in the same area, investigator intensified their efforts before the pyro killed again. Tw months after Padilla's death, firefighters answered an 8:3 a.m. alarm, February 7, 1970, to a burning vacant garage at 74 South Burlington Avenue, also in the Westlake area. Amid th uins, firefighters found the body of a transient who was never dentified. Arson investigators determined the fire was incendiary.

Now there were 10 homicides. Frustrated investigators hoped for a break. On March 28, Winter began looking into eports of fires set in the vicinity of a Westlake apartment house at 2874 Leeward Avenue. A witness said the fires occurred shortly after a stout, grandmotherly-looking woman, who lived at the Leeward address, was seen loitering in the area. Winter and the investigators got their first break when they found that the owner of the Leeward building also owned the Bromley. Records showed that a Jennie Damiani had lived n the Bromley shortly before the fire and now rented an apartment at the Leeward address.

Investigators found that Jennie was more than a seamstress. She had spent about half her life in jail or prison and had been released from the women's prison at Corona, California, just before the epidemic of arson fires started. Jennie's record showed arrests for car thefts and burglary. She had been married at least four times and had been arrested several times in San Diego for prostitution. Jennie received her first lengthy prison sentence following her conviction for stealing the automobile of a San Diego Superior Court judge. Later, Jennie stole an armored bank truck. Not once, however, had she been charged with arson.

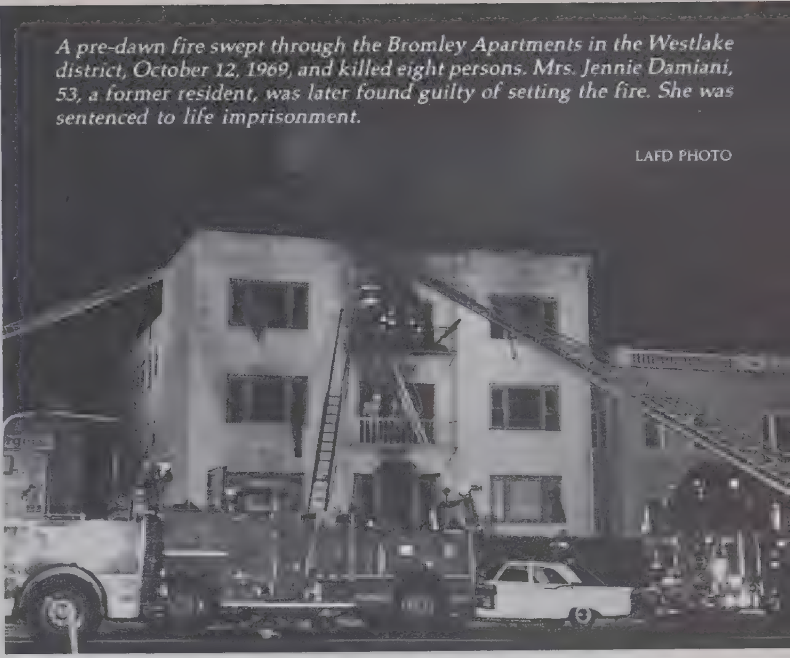
During the next six weeks, the arson unit prioritized surveillance of Jennie. They followed her as she walked to work at a Pico Boulevard garment factory. And they followed her home again. Those weeks were filled with as much frustration as bizarre observations. Jennie would disappear into a building and emerge a few minutes later. Poised to make an arrest with the anticipated immediate outbreak of fire, the investigators watched as nothing happened. Jennie stole a potted plant at one apartment house and gave it to a gardener. She came out of another with a police dog which she gave away. From still another apartment, she exited with a rabbit which she released in Westlake Park.

Investigators' suspicions that Jennie knew she was being followed were virtually confirmed when they observed her suddenly turn around and walk backwards as if to see who was following her. Several fires were started while Jennie was being followed — including one in an old automobile where Jennie ignited a newspaper. The district attorney refused to issue a complaint. He thought he needed more substantial evidence before a multiple homicide arrest would stand up in court.

The denouement came on May 11, 1970, when Jennie's employer tipped Winter that Jennie had quit and said she was moving that day to New York City. How was she going? By air? By bus? By train? Jennie's employer did not know. Hurriedly obtaining an arrest warrant based upon the car fire and calling for police assistance, Winter and the entire arson unit headed for bus and train stations and Los Angeles International Airport, where Winter and five other investigators got a list of all imminent departures for New York City.

Winter picked the most immediate departure — a TWA flight. He went to that terminal where he spotted Jennie. She saw him at the same time and ducked into a restroom. Jennie emerged shortly therafter, walked straight to Winter and said, "Why are you bugging me?" Jennie was arrested, declined an attorney and agreed to go to fire headquarters to answer any questions. There, she said she had set so many fires that perhaps she could be more helpful to investigators if they took her on a tour of the Westlake district.

Before she was jailed at 9 o'clock that night, Jennie confessed to at least 100 fires, including the two that killed the transients. She denied setting the Bromley fire, but admitted that while she lived there, she had touched off a fire in a fence and rubbish. After court-appointed psychiatrists declared Jennie sane, a Superior Court jury on November 20, 1970, found her guilty of nine counts of first degree murder and six counts of arson or attempted arson. Jennie was sentenced to life in the women's prison at Frontera, California. Superior Court Judge Harold C. Shepherd strongly recommended against any possibility of parole for Jennie. By her additional admissions and in later conversations with Winter, who occasionally visited her in prison, she admitted to setting as many as 800 fires.


A pre-dawn fire swept through the Bromley Apartments in the Westlake district, October 12, 1969, and killed eight persons. Mrs. Jennie Damiani, 53, a former resident, was later found guilty of setting the fire. She was sentenced to life imprisonment.

LAFD PHOTO

Immediately after the trial, Magazine Writer Paul Ditzel lunched with Jenny's counsel, Deputy Public Defender H. Harry Sax. "She was one of the most likable defendants I ever represented," said Sax. "Given the difficulties of proving arson, Jennie probably would have gone free if she had kept her mouth shut. The fact that she so willingly cooperated with arson investigators convinced me that Jennie preferred life in prison to freedom. The tragedy of the case is, of course, that so many people had to die before Jennie got her wish." Winter's assessment of Jennie was identical to Sax's.

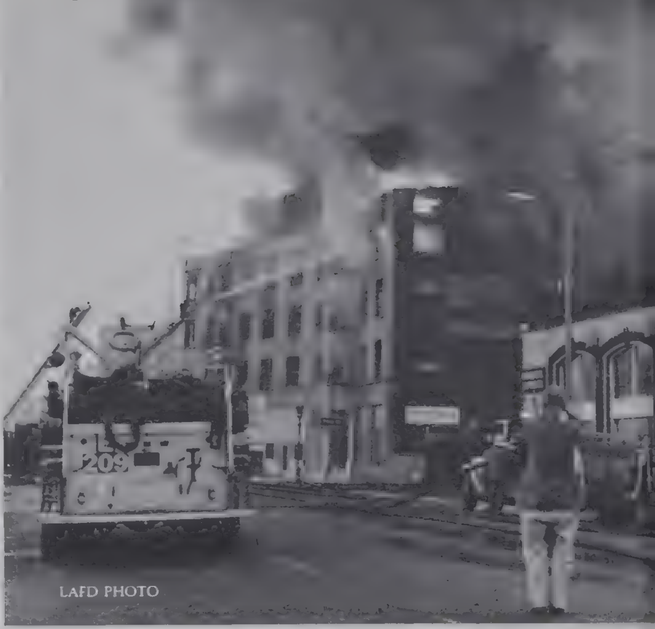
Less than 10 weeks after Firefighter Collier was killed when Snorkel 3 overturned during a downtown fire, the department lost another member in a garment district blaze only a few blocks away from the Snorkel incident. At 7:39 p.m., September 11, 1970, Task Force 30 was among the companies answering an alarm to the three-story Ardee brick-and-concrete building housing sportswear manufacturers. Little, if any, smoke or fire could be seen from either the San Pedro or Ninth Street sides of the building.

Truck 30 laddered the San Pedro Street fire escape and firefighters forcibly entered the labyrinth of offices and fabric-cutting tables typically found in this type of occupancy. Firefighter Reames Rainey of Truck 30 crawled into the increasing smoke and worsening heat while using his flashlight to search for the seat of the fire. Immediately behind him and stretching in a one-and-one-half-inch hoseline were Firefighter Donald J. Romps and Engineer Pat O. Tierney. All were wearing breathing apparatus as the smoke rapidly turned so solidly black that Rainey's light could not penetrate the murk.

As their breathing apparatus signaled their bottles were running low on air, the firefighters decided to follow the hoseline back to the fire escape, so they could return to the street for fresh bottles. Tierney led the way and crawled out of the building. Rainey was suddenly hit from behind by Romps

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Firefighter Donald J. Romps
Truck 30
Died of suffocation in commercial building fire
September 11, 1970



The five-story Ponet Square Hotel at 1249 South Grand Avenue was a caldron of flames and smoke when firefighters arrived.

LAFD PHOTO

who, out of air, pitched forward. Realizing that Romps had somehow lost his breather facepiece, Rainey took off his mask and alternately put it on Romps' face and his own as he dragged Romps 15 feet to a window on the San Pedro side of the building.

Smashing the window with his flashlight, Rainey yelled, "Fireman down!" and at that time fell unconscious; himself overcome by smoke. Two 35-foot ladders were quickly raised to the shattered window and Firefighters Lee R. Hook and F. Wayne Humbard of Truck 30 reached inside the window and pulled Rainey part way out of the steel-barred window while Firefighter Roland J. Roth of Engine 30 started to resuscitate him. Heat was so intense that firefighters had to be covered with a protective spray while taking a severe dose of smoke.

A rotary saw was used to cut away the steel bars. Rainey was brought down an aerial ladder and rushed to Central Receiving Hospital by Rescue-Ambulance 4. While Firefighter Dudley Schumacher drove, Firefighter Larry D. Parke continued resuscitation efforts. Rainey went into cardiac arrest three times. Using closed chest massage Parke restored breathing each time. Moments after Rainey was pulled out of the window, Captain Bob Foster discovered Romps' body. Rainey was awarded the Medal of Valor for his desperate, but unsuccessful efforts to save his fellow firefighter.

Two days after Romps' death, the disaster that firefighters had long anticipated in a Los Angeles firetrap hotel finally occurred. Shortly after 5 a.m., Sunday morning, September 13, 1970, a motorist noticed what he thought were flashing lights in the first floor lobby of the Ponet Square Hotel, 1249 South Grand Avenue at the northwest corner of Pico Boulevard. There were at least 117 residents in the old building; site of a major fire on New Year's Day, 1928.

When the motorist noticed the second floor light up, he realized the four-story, 63-year-old brick apartment hotel, was burning. At 5:31 a.m., Westlake dispatchers answered a phone call from a liquor store across Grand Avenue from the Ponet. "There is a hotel on fire at Pico and Grand," said the caller. "It's burning in the lobby. It's all over! The hotel looks like it's going up!" Task Force 10, Heavy Duty Task Force 9 and Battalion 1 were dispatched at 5:32. As the alarm came over loudspeakers at Fire Station 10, firefighters looked out their second-floor windows of the dormitory and saw thick black smoke and flames rolling from the Ponet.

First-due Task Force 10 firefighters commanded by Capt. Jim Williams, found the Ponet lobby well-involved. Flames were stabbing from the lobby entrance. Task Force 10 firefighters stretched a two-and-one-half inch line into the front door and began a futile attack. Truck 10 raised its aerial and ground ladders and began making rescues from windows on the Grand Avenue side. People were hanging from windows on all four sides of the hotel or preparing to lower themselves with lines fashioned from blankets and bedsheets. A man tied his bedsheets to a television set and began lowering himself from a window. His weight pulled the television out the wir dow. He fell to a nearby roof and the TV landed on top of hin A 16-year-old woman leaped from a fourth floor window an was killed. While additional apparatus and ambulances wer being called, Westlake dispatchers clearly heard screams c trapped hotel residents during the radio messages.

At least 15 of the 25 persons who were injured leaped fron windows. Fortunately, a light well roof at the rear of the Pon and the roof of an adjacent commercial building lessened th height from which they jumped or fell, otherwise, many mo of the leapers would have been killed. Seven LAFD rescu ambulances were quickly-called as the fire suppression an rescue forces soon grew to 149 firefighters and 20 engines, si trucks and two Snorkels. Despite the heavy and fast assaul which was the purpose of the task force concept, smoke an flames swept up open stairways and mushroomed on all fou floors while all but completely-engulfing the hotel. Despite th swift travel of smoke and flames and an obviously delaye notification of the fire department, up to 80 people were re cued by firefighters within 21 minutes after the arrival apparatus.

Eight task forces were in interior and exterior fire attack b 5:52 a.m. Still the flames mauled firefighters. Three minut later, all further interior fire attack was abandoned and th fight turned into an exterior, master stream operation, inclu ing six ladder pipes, two Snorkels, two wagon batteries ar three portable monitors. At 7:00 a.m., the fire was beginning darken. It would be many hours before the body search cou begin because much of the interior of the building had co lapsed.

Nine bodies were recovered that afternoon until furth probing of debris was declared to be too dangerous. The add tional bodies known to be inside the burned-out hulk of th Ponet could only be recovered while the building was bei demolished. Demolition began almost immediately, but it w not until 7 p.m., September 15 — two days after the fire — th three more bodies were found. Not until 8:25 a.m., five da following the disaster, was the 19th and final victim recovere Thirteen of the victims were found to have resided on the t floor; a grim testimony to the built-in disaster potential open, unprotected stairways and corridors.

The arson unit's Don Brian was named chief investigator of he blaze. Brian and his team of investigators traced the origin f the fire to a first floor linen room near the open stairway. The fire was determined to be incendiary. After hundreds of nterviews, arson investigators arrested Alejandro Castro Fiueroa, 44, on October 9, 1970. Figueroa, a Ponet tenant at the me of the fire, had previously claimed credit for discovering nd extinguishing several fires in the Ponet, including one on he evening prior to the disaster. That fire was not reported to he LAFD. While Figueroa was dousing the fire, someone stole is harmonica which he had left in the lobby. Investigators oncluded that his motive was spite.

On May 17, 1971, a Superior Court jury found Figueroa uilty of one count of arson and 19 counts of first degree murder. Three days later he was sentenced to life in the Caliornia State Prison Colony, San Luis Obispo. He has consisently been denied parole.

The Ponet disaster, the city's worst apartment hotel fire at he time, at last resulted in City Council action to begin to ddress the open stairway problem. On November 17, 1971, he council passed Ordinance No. 142,713. The law ordered hat buildings of more than two stories in height were required o have enclosed stairways and corridors protected by self-losing doors made of as much as up to one-hour fire-resistant material.

Those doors, while not new to fire protection, became commonly-known in Los Angeles as Ponet doors. The so-called Ponet Square Ordinance was not all the LAFD wanted; mainly because building owners were given four years to comply. If he ordinance was at least a start to solve a problem that had xisted since the LAFD went in service in 1886, it would not prevent an even worse disaster three years later.

Twelve days after the Ponet, ferociously hot Santa Ana winds gusting up to 70 miles-per-hour, while humidity fell below seven percent, touched off one of the worst sieges of brush fires throughout Southern California. Three major fires, tarting in Los Angeles County, began stabbing into the city's brushlands on September 25, 1970. Girding for the inevitable, he Coldwater Signal Office at 11:05 a.m., dispatched a double ssignment of apparatus, including Engines 107, 104, 103, 96, 8 and 75; Truck 96, Helicopter 5 and Battalions 15 and 12 to he north end of Tampa Boulevard, near a crest of the Santa Susana Mountain Range. There they would begin to form battlelines for a rapidly approaching brush fire that had started many miles to the north near a Newhall refinery after winds blew down power lines.

At 11:24 a.m., Battalion 15 Chief Stan Borden reported from he end of Tampa that wind-driven smoke and flames would likely invade the Porter Ranch Estates and slash southwesterly nto Chatsworth at the far northwestern end of the San Fernando Valley. The area was covered with thousands of high-value homes; most of them with wood-shingle roofs. Additional companies were called to buttress fire defenses. There was no question disaster was in the wind, when, starting at 12:13 p.m., the first of an eventual 19 engines and a truck company were sent into Lopez Canyon, northeast of Pacoima, where another brush fire starting in Los Angeles County was slopping over into the city.

A command post was set up at Fire Station 18 on Balboa Boulevard to monitor the battlefront extending from Tampa east to Balboa. The fire first tested the LAFD's defenses when, at 12:44 p.m., it tentatively entered Los Angeles at the Sulphur Springs fire road, one mile west of Balboa, but was turned back. The Newhall fire was perverse in its treachery. That was not where the full-scale invasion would occur.

Instead, the rampaging flames, starting at 1:47 p.m., began spilling down into Aliso and Limekiln Canyons, immediately west of Tampa. Borden radioed for still more companies. Now that the Newhall fire had declared the path of destruction it had chosen, Deputy Chief Kenneth R. Long ordered the command post moved to Fire Station 107 on Devonshire Street in Chatsworth, as the entire valley was blanketed with gray smoke and fire ash.

Master streams from aerial ladders and a Snorkel combined with a fierce interior attack, but the Ponet Square Hotel was beyond saving. Nineteen persons were killed in the early morning, September 13, 1970, disaster.

Even as dozens of companies were moving into the northwest valley, wind-driven firebrands at 1:52 p.m., ignited an orange grove at Devonshire and Corbin Avenue in Chatsworth. Soon, rows of eucalyptus trees were blazing and still more firebrands were seeding Chatsworth. Taking root on wood-shingle roofs, under eaves and wherever they could find fuel, the first structure fire was reported at 2:05 p.m., when a house at 10700 Winnetka Avenue was found to be well-involved.

Shortly thereafter, Long called for a recall of off-duty firefighters and at 3:09 p.m., he radioed that as many as 30 homes were burning in the area of De Soto Avenue north of Devonshire. As evacuation began, 20 more companies were called to the command post by Long at 3:27 p.m. During the next several hours, 173 structures, mostly homes in Chatsworth, were destroyed. The wind-goaded flames pierced Ventura County and ran in a southerly direction until they linked with a major brush fire burning in the Malibu area of Los Angeles County.

By 8 a.m., the following morning, September 26, an additional command post was established at Fire Station 105 in Woodland Hills, where 19 engines and two helicopters were held at-the-ready. While Los Angeles County firefighters had their hands full that day, LAFD firefighters got a breather while the Santa Anas continued to rage. The following day, still another brush fire, starting in Los Angeles County, slashed into the city at Topanga Canyon Boulevard at Mulholland Drive. Starting at 2:39 p.m., that September 27, with Coldwater's dispatch of Engines 84, 83, 97, 98 and 99, the assault force of firefighters grew to a total of 39 engines and three helicopters directed by seven battalion chiefs and an assistant chief. The firefighters battled the blaze to a stop before it entered the thickly-built residential areas of Woodland Hills. No homes were lost.

As expected, the city's brush fires began again on the third day, September 28. The worst of them were in Griffith Park where two fires required the combined forces of 24 engines and two truck companies.

Tuesday morning, February 9, 1971, was about to dawn bright and clear. All was quiet among the LAFD's 105 stations manned by 967 on-duty firefighters. Only three of the department's 25 rescue-ambulances were out of quarters. Rescue-Ambulances 22, 34 and 53 were returning to quarters from their calls. Engine 46, the only fire suppression company out of quarters, was picking up lines after a 5:43 a.m., call to a minor fire at 3919 South LaSalle Street in south Los Angeles.

At 41.6 seconds past 6 a.m., a catastrophic earthquake lasting 12 seconds during its initial jolt, whiplashed the greater Los Angeles area. Measuring 6.6 on the Richter Scale, the quake was the worst in the state since the 1906 San Francisco disaster. As alarm boards at the Coldwater and Westlake Signal Offices lit up, the entire department, following procedure, went on earthquake standby. Helicopters scrambled and took to the air to look for fires and other problems. Early reports indicated the worst damage had occurred in Sylmar and other areas in the northernmost end of the San Fernando Valley.

Capt. Oran W. Converse and the firefighters at Sylmar's Fire Station 91, the northernmost firehouse in the city, were jolted awake by the violent shaking which caused major structural damage to the station. The force of the quake pushed the triple combination pumper against the front door. Converse tried to call Coldwater. The firephone was dead. Citizens pounding at the doors were reporting fires around the station. They helped firefighters force open the doors.

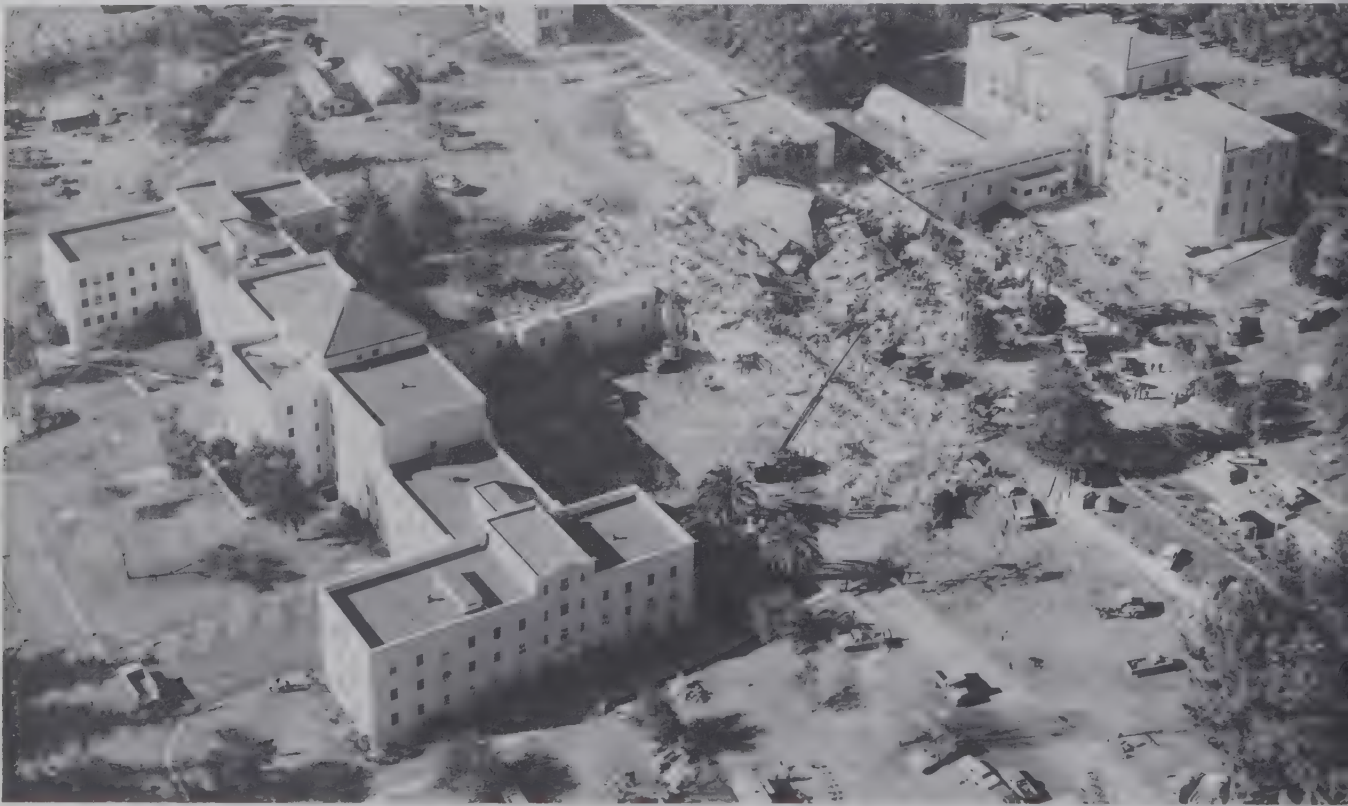
As Engine 91 firefighters pulled out of quarters with their triple and a 600-gallon tank wagon, they saw fires burning on Borden Avenue near Tyler Street. Converse radioed Coldwater. Dispatchers, overwhelmed by telephone calls and radio traffic, did not answer. Engine 91 firefighters attacked the worst of the fires: a well-involved split-level frame dwelling and garage at 13366 Borden Avenue until they ran out of water. Hydrants were dry due to quake-shattered mains. While searching for
residual supply in nearby mains, firefighters scooped dirt ont
the flames.

Both Coldwater and Westlake were in a virtual communic
tions gridlock. Fire Station 108 firefighters went to Coldwat
to assist in handling calls. At Westlake, it was discovered th
the city's fire alarm box system had been knocked out
service. The system would not be restored for 16 hours. Durin
the first 30 minutes after the quake, Coldwater and Westlak
dispatched 100 companies and all 25 rescue-ambulances
incidents.

One of Coldwater's first dispatches sent Task Force 98 an
Battalion 12 Chief Keith A. Wilson to a fire in the Sylma
Square shopping center, Foothill Boulevard and Sayre Stree
where they were confronted with a major fire in the secon
floor of the occupancy and no water nearby to fight it. Fire
fighters laid 1600 feet of hose to where they found residu
supplies.

As Engine 91 and the companies at the shopping center we
getting a handle on their fires, what appeared to be smoke w
seen at 6:27 a.m., off to the northeast in the vicinity of the L
Angeles County Olive View Medical Center. Engine 91, lea
ing its tank wagon firefighters to continue to attack neighbo
hood fires, joined Truck 98 and Wilson who were heading
the direction of the loomup.

The problem was indeed at the new Olive View Medic
Center, a five-story complex at 14445 Olive View Drive, Sy
mar. The center, in county territory, was an automatic mutu
aid call for the LAFD. County Engine 46 firefighters, statione
on hospital grounds, were themselves momentarily trapped
their station. County Capt. Bert Buck recalled, "The engine ha
been bounced four feet forward and was jammed against t
doors. I used the radio to report that the hospital was badl
damaged and we couldn't get out." Firefighters and hospit



Forty-seven persons were killed in the collapse of a large portion of the Veterans Administration Hospital in Sylmar when an earthquake measuring 6.6 on the Richter Scale struck the Los Angeles area short after 6 a.m., February 9, 1971.

orkers forced the firehouse doors open.

The five-story hospital complex with 600 beds was only six-eeks old, but was not built to withstand an earthquake. owering columns of masonry, which had stood as hospital ngs, had either fallen outward or simply collapsed. Interior mage was horrific. Miraculously, only three persons were lled: two patients who expired when their respirator cords ere jerked from the walls as their beds rolled across the ward d an ambulance driver, who was crushed under a collapsed 0-foot-long concrete roof slab.

As Wilson and the LAFD firefighters arrived, hospital work- s were evacuating the building and assisting with the in- red. At 6:27 a.m., Wilson radioed for help and Coldwater sent ask Force 87, Engine 75 and Rescue-Ambulances 87 and 98. hortly thereafter, the evacuation force of city and county refighters was augmented by the LAFD's Heavy Utility 88, ith its heavy-duty extrication equipment, Task Force 90, two AFD skip-loaders, a bulldozer, four buses for evacuating mbulatory patients and Helicopters 1, 3, 4 and 5. The helicop- rs airlifted 23 patients and quake victims from Olive View to oly Cross and Pacoima Lutheran Hospitals. Others were tak- n by rescue-ambulances, private ambulances and other vehi- es to five area hospitals.

Chief officers were, meanwhile, patrolling their districts roughout the city to survey damage. At 6:35 a.m., Battalion 1 me upon the quake-damaged Midnight Mission, housing ansients at 396 South Los Angeles Street. A transient, fleeing e old two-story building, was struck by falling bricks and lay ead in the middle of the street. Battalion 1 called for Task orce 3 and Heavy Utility 6 to assist in evacuating the building.

The worst of the earthquake-caused fires was reported to oldwater at 7:04 a.m., when a small fire, apparently starting om a short circuit in a popcorn maker, rapidly spread roughout the huge Thrifty Drug Store in the Granada Vil- ge shopping center at the northwest corner of Chatsworth treet and Zelzah Avenue. First-arriving firefighters quickly ent into master stream operations as the flames spread along row of connecting single-story retail stores to the west of the upermarket drug store.

Engine 103 arrived about the same time as Engine 107, Task orce 96 and Battalion 15. Calls for help brought two more task orces and an engine company. Flames quickly-engulfed the upermarket and, one-by-one, spread through a common attic o destroy the row of stores. Under normal circumstances, the ire would have been stopped in its incipiency, but the da- aged mains in the area forced firefighters to rely upon resid- al water. The fire did not stop until it reached a firewall near hat was then the Devonshire Station of the LAPD. The fire urned for hours as weak streams arced ineffectively into the oomed stores.

Immediately after the quake, Deputy Chief Kenneth R. Long was picked up by a LAFD helicopter for an aerial reconnais- ance of the worst-hit Sylmar area. At 7:23 a.m., Long came upon the worst disaster site of all: the huge Veterans Adminis- ration Hospital at 13000 Sayre Street, Sylmar, also in county erritory. From the helicopter, the mid-section of the sprawling omplex appeared as if a giant had stomped it.

Long radioed for five task forces and three chief officers. Coldwater sent Task Forces 74, 29, 37, 26 and 39, along with Battalion Chiefs Dick Williams and Jack Gerard, as well as Assistant Chiefs Benjamin Renfro and Robert Radke. Ten minutes later, Long called for every available rescue-ambu- ance as he discovered, upon landing at the hospital, that casu- lties were heavy.

During the following hours, firefighters using heavy-duty escue and extrication equipment, including cranes from the ity's Departments of Water and Power and Public Works, abored to reach victims and survivors. Total LAFD commitments, before the city forces were relieved at the hospital by Los Angeles County firefighters, included eight task forces, nine rescue-ambulances, a tractor, a skiploader and a 40-man work party under six chief officers. Three LAFD helicopters airlifted eight victims to Children's Hospital and to St. Joseph's Medical Center.

Heavy-duty cranes were used by firefighters to lift slabs and debris to reach victims of the collapse of the Veterans Administration Hospital. Five LAFD firefighters were awarded Medals of Valor in recognition of their extraordinary rescue efforts under great personal danger to themselves.

LAFD PHOTO

The extrication and life-saving activities at the Veterans Administration Hospital were carried out by firefighters under the worst possible conditions. Not only did they have to be careful not to cause further injuries as they used their heavy-duty equipment, but firefighters had to crawl under the debris during the frequent aftershocks which threatened still more structural collapses. In recognition of their extraordinary rescue efforts under great personal danger to themselves, five LAFD firefighters were awarded Medals of Valor: William R. Waite and James A. S. Hoffman, both of Truck 90; Paul D. Ruff of Crash 90; and Jay D. Wiese and Gary T. Shelford of Engine 39. Of the 58 who died in the earthquake, 47 were killed in the Veterans Administration Hospital collapse.

Even as firefighters worked to free trapped victims, off-duty Battalion 15 Chief Stanley Borden was directed to investigate Helicopter Pilot Pat Quinn's report of damage at the huge Van Norman Reservoir immediately north of Granada Hills. "I found the dam in a dangerous condition," Borden reported. "The face of the dam was partially gone. The earth backing was caving in and the water was close to the top." Borden also discovered that there was no water in the mains north of Rinaldi Street supplying the exclusive Knollwood Hills Estates residential district and unreliable water pressure in the mains south of Rinaldi.

Borden called for water-carrying tank wagons to be staged at Fire Station 18's command post on Balboa in the event of outbreaks of fire in the area. From 8:35 a.m., until that night, a total of 21 tank wagons moved into the Granada Hills area.

The damaged San Fernando Dam complex supplied about 80 percent of the city's water supply. If the dam collapsed, it would send hundreds of millions of gallons of water tumbling down upon thickly-populated Granada Hills. The prospect of that catastrophe was worse than the earthquake. Police ordered total evacuation of 80,000 people from residences and businesses in an area approximating Rinaldi on the north, Victory Boulevard on the south, the San Diego Freeway on the east and Balboa on the west. Fortunately, the dam held, but people were not permitted to return to the evacuated area for days.

As the day of the quake wore on, fire and rescue calls diminished, but the disaster potential remained in areas that were low on, or without, water pressure and telephone service. Too, there was the threat of even worse aftershocks than those that peppered the southland throughout the day. Fire companies, water tankers and helicopters patrolled the northernmost section of the city in search of fires or rescue problems.

A major concern, in addition to the threatened collapse of the reservoir, was fire protection all along the north end of the San Fernando Valley and in certain other areas of the valley.

A line of reserve pumpers, including three new LAFD diesel engines awaiting delivery to stations, was formed along the north end of the valley. Eventually the line included 17 pumpers which were used to bypass damaged or unreliable water mains to provide water for domestic and firefighting use in the north end of the valley, mostly above Rinaldi. Several other pumpers served similar functions in the Woodland Hills area of the west valley. During the week following the quake, the 17 pumpers logged a total of 2500 pump hours before the water system was restored.

During the first 24 hours of quake operations, LAFD and area fire departments answered 1392 incidents; 109 of them fires. More than 30,000 calls came into the Coldwater and Westlake Signal Offices during the 24-hour period following the earthquake. Normal daily traffic averaged 3500 calls at that time. The LAFD did not return to routine operations for more than a week. Many fire department facilities were damaged; most notably Fire Stations 3, 17, 27, 32, 91, 94 and the Westlake Signal Office. The Pacific Fire Rating Bureau put earthquake losses in the Los Angeles County area at $511 million.

Sylmar seemed jinxed when another disaster, a few months after the earthquake, hit the area. The Lockheed Shipbuilding and Construction Company of Seattle was digging a 5.5-mile-long tunnel, 170-feet underground, for the Metropolitan Water District's Feather River Project. The first clue of impending disaster came at 2:30 a.m., June 23, 1971, when Task Force 98, Engine 91, Rescue-Ambulance 98 and Battalion 12 Chief Leo Najarian were dispatched by Coldwater to 12800 Fenton Avenue, following a report of an explosion at the tunnel's digging head.

Four tunnel workers suffered fractures and burns in what Najarian determined was a methane explosion touched off by a welder's torch or by a "mole" digger machine striking a spark when it hit hard rock. Najarian called for one more rescue-ambulance and was sent Rescue 89. Using generator fans, Engine 91 began venting the tunnel at an opening on Foothill Boulevard, just west of Roxford Street. Determining that the workers were only periodically testing for the presence of methane, Najarian instructed supervisors to make continuous testings and to obtain better breathing apparatus.

Najarian, who was scheduled to work a double shift, was concerned by the disaster that almost happened. During the day he monitored activities at the tunnel and learned that state safety inspectors had certified that work could continue. When no more alarms came from the 18-foot-diameter bore site, Najarian began to hope his worst fears would not be realized. Considered by the department as its foremost authority on hazardous materials, Najarian's nagging worries continued into the evening.

Najarian had just returned from an alarm after midnight when Rescue-Ambulance 98, stationed in his quarters, was dispatched at 12:51 a.m., to a tunnel explosion at the sam address as the earlier one. Najarian would have followed Re cue 98, except that at the same time he was dispatched to a fi in Engine 24's district in Sunland. When 24's sizeup indicate the fire was small, Najarian radioed Rescue 98 for a report c the tunnel explosion. Rescue 98's firefighters said a seve explosion had occurred some five miles inside the Fento Street portal where as many as 20 workers were digging wit the mole.

Firefighters in cage are lowered down mine shaft where they w board a train which will take them five miles inside a smoke-fill tunnel to search for victims of a methane explosion. The 12:51 a.m June 24, 1971, explosion in Sylmar killed 17 workers who were di ging the tunnel for the Metropolitan Water District. Nineteen LAF firefighters were awarded Medals of Valor for their rescue effor under perilously difficult conditions, including smoke, heat and t possibility of more explosions.

En route at 1 a.m., Najarian called for Task Force 98 respond to the Fenton tunnel entrance and Engine 91 to go the vent hole at Roxford and Foothill. Najarian also called for second ambulance and was sent Rescue 89. Najarian decided go to the vent hole location because that would put him clos to the actual site of the explosion. Upon arrival, Najarian w told by Lockheed Project Manager Loren G. Savage that explosion "20 times worse than the previous night" had o curred 5.3 miles inside the tunnel. Only one worker had e caped. Eighteen were missing.

Najarian asked what the methane readings were at the tin of the explosion. He was told workers had recorded readings only 1 percent when the digger was not working. When th mole started boring, however, the workers were entering earthquake fault and the dirt turned to a powdery consistenc While the digger cut, the gas appeared to be coming out puffs as if from pockets of heavily-concentrated methane.

A crane was ordered to the vent hole opening on Foothill Najarian hurried to the Fenton portal opening where a sear team would have to go in to look for the 18 missing worke En route, he radioed Coldwater, "In all probability, a maj disaster has occurred." Najarian called for longer duratic breathing apparatus and the air utility unit with its complement of additional air bottles and capabilities for on-scene efilling of them as well as bottles normally carried aboard pparatus.

To reach the tunnel entrance, firefighters had to be lowered n a cage some 170 feet to the portal opening. Task Force 98 firefighters began loading a rescue train of two donkey engine gondola cars with all available breathing apparatus, extra air bottles, litter baskets and stretchers, flashlights, resuscitators and first aid equipment. Rescue 98 Firefighters Gerald R. Rainwater and Thomas L. Cox, along with Savage and two tunnel workers, would go in on the first rescue train. If one gondola car derailed, the other donkey engine car could back out of the tunnel with the rescue team. With triple backup 30 minute air supplies for each team member, it was pre-arranged that if they did not come out after 30 minutes a second train would go in after them.

As the rescue train entered the tunnel and rounded the first bend, radio contact was, as expected, lost due to the winding nature of the tunnel. Najarian, Task Force 98 and Rescue 89 proceeded to the Foothill Boulevard vent hole. When the rescue team did not return in half-an-hour, a second rescue team was starting into the tunnel when they heard honking and saw the red light of the returning rescue team. The news was all bad.

Rainwater and Cox, riding in the front gondola, reported that visibility, even with their powerful Wheat lamps, was zero in the million-cubic-feet of thick smoke bottled inside the tunnel. At about 800 feet inside the tunnel, their gondola suddenly struck an object, derailed and turned sideways. The firefighters had climbed out of the gondola and found they had run over a body which could not be seen with their lights. Cox and Rainwater determined the body was that of a worker obviously killed in the explosion. Rainwater proceeded down the tracks while looking for more victims until he fell into a four-foot-hole and was injured.

Uncoupling the lead gondola, the rescue team returned to the Fenton Street portal. The firefighters concurred with Savage that the excessive concentrations of smoke and gases meant that if any of the 18 workers on the graveyard shift survived the explosion, they were almost assuredly dead from exposure to lethal heat, smoke and gases.

Regardless of whether anyone remained alive inside the tunnel, rescue attempts had to continue and bodies had to be brought out. A second search-and-rescue train slowly entered the tunnel, disappeared around the bend and, while proceeding deep into the murk discovered, 1000 feet inside an unconscious worker, Ralph Brissette. Miraculously, the force of the explosion threw him to an area where fresh air was being pumped into the tunnel. Rescue 39 rushed him to Pacoima Lutheran Hospital where he would survive.

During the next two days, fire companies worked in tandem, under extremely hazardous conditions, while riding rescue trains in and out of the hot, smoky, water-filled tunnel while extinguishing fires and searching for victims. The LAFD operations continued for three days until June 26, when all 17 bodies were recovered. Medals of Valor were awarded to Rainwater and Cox as well as to 17 other firefighters who participated in the Sylmar tunnel disaster.

The year, 1972, got off to a deadly start for the LAFD. On the night of Washington's Birthday, February 22, burglars set fire to the Union Manufacturing and Distributing Company, 241 West 116th Place. Thirteen companies of south side firefighters, including Task Force 33, turned out to the greater alarm fire which destroyed the building.

Firefighters Paul R. Widrig, 25, and Theodore A. Currie, both of Engine 33, were advancing a hoseline into the building when a mezzanine storage area collapsed and killed them. Widrig was survived by his wife, Deborah, and an infant son, Ryan Paul. Currie's survivors included his wife, Geraldine, and three teen-aged sons, Steve, Craig and Kent. Widrig had been a member of the department for two years. Currie was a 10-year veteran.

Despite the dangers inherent in the waterfront area, only one firefighter was killed in the line of duty there during the department's first 100 years of service. On March 22, 1973, workers in the eight-acre scrap metal yard of H&S Sales, 1261

LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT
MEDAL OF
VALOR

Nineteen LAFD firefighters were awarded Medals of Valor for their Sylmar Tunnel rescue efforts under perilously difficult conditions, including smoke heat and the possibility of more explosions.

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Firefighter Paul R. Widrig
Engine 33
Died of injuries suffered in the collapse of a mezzanine during a commercial building fire
February 22, 1972

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Firefighter Theodore A. Currie
Engine 33
Died of injuries suffered in the collapse of a mezzanine during a commercial building fire
February 22, 1972

North Alameda Street, Wilmington, were filling a crane with gasoline from a 55 gallon drum when vapors ignited. Flames shot up the crane and involved a nearby forklift truck. Task Force 38 was among the companies dispatched at 7:54 a.m. As firefighters were battling the blaze, a cable on the boom of the crane snapped. The boom fell over, striking and fatally injuring Capt. Kenneth D. Kinnaman, 47, of Engine 38.

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Capt. Kenneth D. Kinnaman
Engine 38
Died of injuries when a crane boom collapsed
March 22, 1973

Westlake was still the focal point for metropolitan area alarms when a dispatcher received a telephone call at 11:19 p.m., November 15, 1973, from Mrs. Susan Mons, 1734 West Sixth Street, only a few blocks east of the signal office. "There's a fire in the lobby of the Stratford Hotel across the street. The whole thing is going up." She gave the address of the 45-unit Stratford Apartment hotel, 1735 West Sixth Street. Westlake dispatched Heavy Duty Task Force 11, Task Force 20, Engine 6 and Battalion 11 Chief Eugene M. Schmitz.

Evidence that the Stratford had been burning for many minutes is shown by Fire Station 11's Seventh Street location, only a short distance away from the three-story hotel, plus a fourth floor penthouse, where at least 120 people, mostly Spanish-speaking lived. Conditions as he found them were reported by Schmitz:

"A large number of people . . . were leaning or hanging out of windows. Children and infants were being dropped to waiting hands from fire escapes and windows. Many had jumped from upper floors. Others threatened to follow. People, screaming and crying, were everywhere on all four sides of the building.

Dispatching from the $4.25 million Operations Control Division (OCD), located five floors underneath City Hall East, started on June 26, 1973.

STRATFORD
APARTMENT

Firefighters remove bodies from the Stratford Apartment Hotel, 1734 West Sixth Street at Burlington Avenue, following the November 15, 1973, disaster which killed 25 persons. Although the hotel was fully-involved upon their arrival, first alarm companies made 39 rescues. An additional 21 persons were saved as additional companies arrived.

"An intense, scarlet red, hot fire was rolling out of the front of the lobby, lapping upward to cover most of the four-story (penthouse) section. Fire was visible in second and third floor apartments adjacent to the lobby area. The penthouse was venting a large amount of fire above the west lobby (open) stairway. The roof . . . above the east lobby stairwell was venting a turbulent ball of smoke and flame that flashed brightly as air was drawn in. Smoke was issuing from the third-floor hallways at the front; heavily from the west wing and less from the east wing. The roofs of both rear wings and the rear third floor were involved with fire."

The H-shaped Stratford bore many similarities to the Ponet Square. Both were about 64-years-old. Both were about the same size. Both had open stairways — although the Stratford had more than the Ponet. Both fires originated in the lobby area. Both were incendiary. Both were fully-involved before the LAFD was notified. Both fires shot like blow torches up open stairways and, mushrooming, spread out along flammable corridors and into rooms. And, like the Ponet, the Stratford fire would result in a catastrophic loss of life: 25 people — 16 adults and nine children — most of whom were probably dead before Heavy Duty Task Force 11 and the other companies left quarters.

Schmitz, immediately upon arrival at 11:21 p.m., called for Heavy Duty Task Forces 3 and 9; Task Forces 10 and 15, four rescue-ambulances and an air utility unit with its on-board stowage of air bottles and capabilities for filling more. Additional calls would bring a total of 10 rescue-ambulances, three heavy duty task forces, eight regular task forces and three single-piece triple combination engines.

Probably not since the Watts riots had the value of heavy

Acetone vapors from a ruptured pipe touched off 21 tanks of various chemicals, August 8, 1972, at the General American Transportation Corporation, San Pedro. Fireboat 2 docked at Berth 55 and supplied 17 lines feeding master stream appliances.

About an hour into the fire, a 36-foot-tall tank containing 10,464 gallons of aircraft jet fuel exploded. The tank skyrocketed into the sky and slammed down upon a railroad tank car and warehouse roof.

With the fire stubbornly continuing, Deputy Chief Kenneth R. Long made a unique command decision. He ordered Crash 80, a foam company to the fire from Fire Station 80 at Los Angeles International Airport. Crash 80's large turret nozzle delivered a 750-gallon-per-minute knockout punch of foam as it made sweeps along the outer edges of the burning tanks. The fire was soon controlled.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF BILL DAHLQUIST

duty task forces been better demonstrated. Schmitz split Heavy Duty Task Force 11. He ordered two of the engines to make a hard-hitting interior attack into the lobby and the third engine to go to the rear of the building and lay in lines while Truck 11 firefighters were laddering the building.

When Task Force 20 and Engine 6 arrived a few minutes later, Schmitz combined these companies into a heavy duty task force. "Go total search and rescue," he told them. "Progress in advancing (29) hoselines was slow," Schmitz reported. "The heat and fire flashing over firefighters' heads and behind them . . . men stepping through burned-out stairs . . . debris on the stairs turning them into ramps causing men to slip and fall . . . plaster, wood and pipes striking the advancing firemen as the plumbing fell from the ceilings . . . The building was actually falling apart from the fire damage."

Despite these formidable obstacles, the task force concept of hit-'em-hard-with-everything-you've-got resulted in a knockdown by firefighters in the amazingly short timespan of only 24 minutes. Firefighters made more than 60 rescues, mostly by ladders; 39 of them by first alarm companies. The story of the Stratford is not that it had taken over the Ponet's dubious claim as the worst apartment hotel fire in the city's history. The story — untold at the time — was that so many of the more than 120 people inside the Stratford, were able to escape because of the Herculean efforts of LAFD firefighters.

Dr. Richard Scott, staff physician of County/USC Hospital, set up a triaging area — believed to be the first at a major multi-casualty incident in Los Angeles — and worked closely with the 10 responding rescue-ambulances; two of them manned by paramedics. The ambulances transported 59 persons while the American Red Cross made temporary housing arrangements for the homeless. Four of the injured were firefighters: Capts. Merlin Rudd and Albert de la Pena of Task Force 11; Firefighter Harold Fliegner of Task Force 3 and Firefighter Richard Ortiz of Task Force 20.

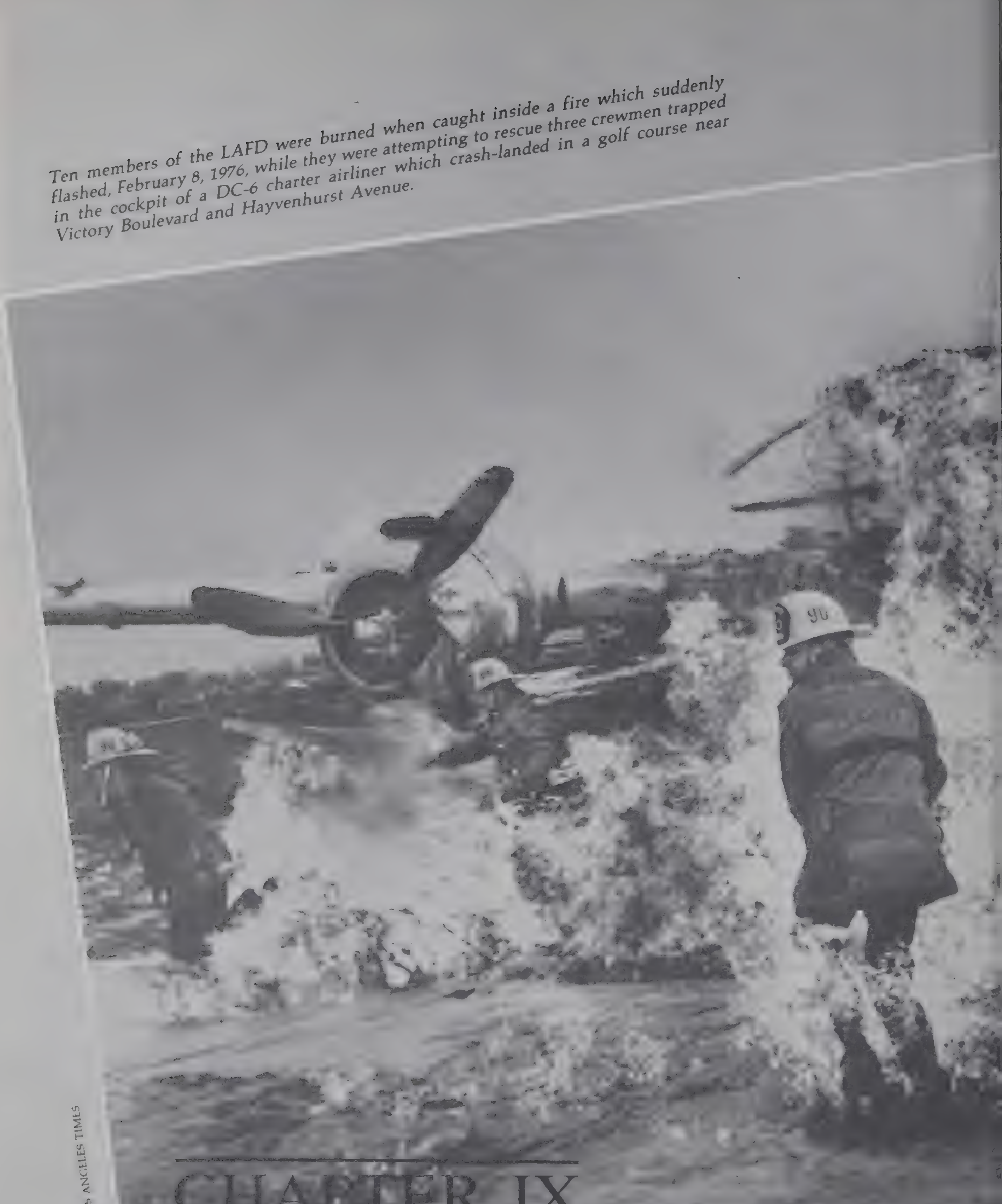
Investigator Don Brian was assigned to head the Stratford investigation. It was determined that the fire was arson and started in a sofa near a lobby open stairway. A teenaged male suspect, with a prior arson record, was arrested when investigators were able to place him inside the Stratford at the time the fire started. The youth was held to stand trial, but the district attorney's office decided not to prosecute for lack of evidence. Charges were dropped. Frustrated arson investigators, convinced they had found the person responsible for the Stratford fire, felt somewhat better when they learned that the freed suspect was later found guilty of derailing a train. He was imprisoned and remains there today.

The day after the Stratford fire, Chief Engineer Hill appeared before the City Council. "The firefighting efforts expended by our men in the quick control of this fire were miraculous," said the chief engineer, who added that he could not always guarantee a miracle, considering that there were at least 1500 similar occupancies in Los Angeles with firetrap conditions as bad, if not worse, than the Stratford's.

Hill further observed that the Stratford's owner had, on April 4, 1972, nearly two years before the fire, been ordered by the Department of Building and Safety to enclose the building's open stairways under provisions of the Ponet Square Ordinance. No compliance had been attempted at the time of the fire. Councilman John Ferraro, in whose district the Stratford was located, introduced a motion to amend the Ponet Square Ordinance by rescinding the four-year grace period for enclosing open stairways.

Other councilmen supported Ferraro. Owners of these firetrap buildings were given six months to comply with stairway enclosure requirements or face demolition of their buildings. The ordinance was quickly approved and signed into law, November 23, 1973, by Mayor Tom Bradley. The LAFD thus took one more giant step forward to protect the lives of people living in these old buildings. The department would have to take one more step before it would be satisfied that the citizens were as fully-protected from fire as possible. But that step only resulted after one more disastrous downtown apartment hotel fire nine years later.

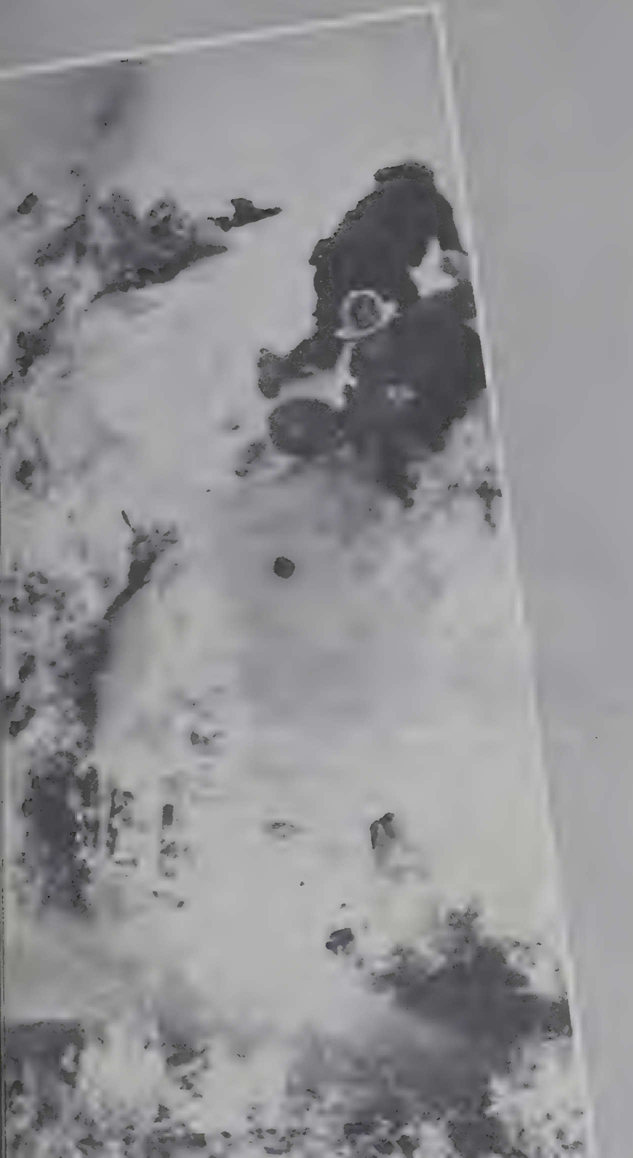
Ten members of the LAFD were burned when caught inside a fire which suddenly flashed, February 8, 1976, while they were attempting to rescue three crewmen trapped in the cockpit of a DC-6 charter airliner which crash-landed in a golf course near Victory Boulevard and Hayvenhurst Avenue.



BORIS YARO/LOS ANGELES TIMES

CHAPTER IX

HAZ-MATS, HIGH-RISES AND ARSON



Los Angeles' tight cluster of hundreds of tall commercial and light-to-moderate manufacturing occupancies surrounding Fire Station 17 at 710 South Santa Fe Avenue on the city's near east side, were virtually deserted that Saturday night, August 17, 1974. Vehicle traffic was light and only a few transients shuffled along the all-but-deserted streets.

Several of them saw flames around a truck trailer in the fenced yard of the Interamerican Star Truck and Warehouse Corporation, 612 South Mateo Street. They paid scant attention. Rubbish fires were commonplace in the area. Why bother to pull a fire alarm box or go to the nearby firehouse to report the small fire? Firefighters had more important things to do than put out trash fires. Calling the fire department would, moreover, cost a dime. Calling the fire department, as it would later be learned, would likely have cost the lives of at least 14 firefighters from Fire Station 17.

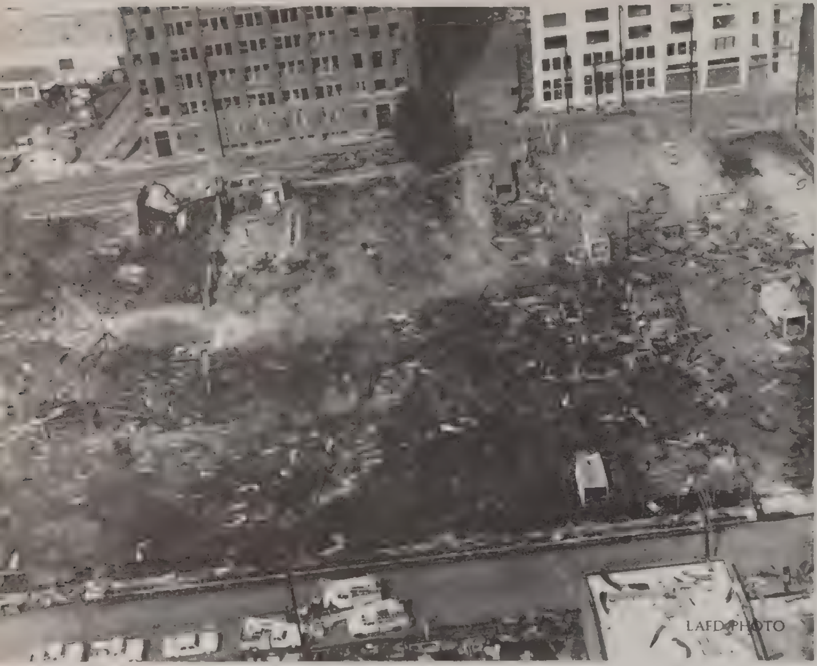
At 8:40 p.m., an explosion felt for more than 30 miles erupted from the Star yard. A police helicopter pilot reported sighting "an atomic-like mushroom fireball" rolling hundreds of feet into the sky. The truck trailer disintegrated, as did the 220-by-58-foot corrugated open shed in which it was parked. A raging fire burst forth from where they had stood. Windows were shattered for blocks around and at least four separate structure fires propagated. Two hundred buildings in a 10-square-block area were damaged.

The thunderclap blast knocked out power in Fire Station 17 and damaged the automatic door opener. Task Force 17 firefighters turned on their apparatus headlights for illumination while they struggled to open the doors, as Battalion 7 Chief John J. Rooney rushed to his sedan. Task Force 17 and Rooney pulled out of quarters and drove over debris littering the street as they made their way to the fire they could see at Star Trucking. They saw another fire burning in the sixth floor of the nearby Gold Furniture warehouse.

Rooney immediately began calling for additional task forces and a helicopter to look for spot fires. Quickly converging upon the disaster area were a total of eight additional task forces and two rescue-ambulances under command of Deputy Chief Anthony E. Giordano (Jordan). Chief Engineer Hill, who soon arrived, noted that the rescue-ambulances would not be needed. Had the explosion occurred during normal, working hours, a catastrophic loss of life would undoubtedly have occurred.

Task forces went into master stream operation on the Star Trucking complex and attacked nearby fires. Helicopter 2 spotted two commercial building roof fires and apparatus was dispatched to those locations from staging at Seventh and Imperial Streets. Fearing additional explosions, companies perimetered the fire, while Battalion 12 Chief Leo Najarian, who was the department's highly-regarded dangerous chemicals authority, was special-called. Cautiously attacking from all sides, the fires were knocked down in 40 minutes.

Investigators learned that the truck trailer contained more than six tons of highly-unstable and explosive organic peroxides. The 270 cartons of the chemicals consisted of the material in liquid and paste form in gallon-sized plastic jugs and other containers. The cargo had been loaded on wooden pallets and lifted into the trailer on Friday afternoon, more than 24 hours before the explosion. Organic peroxide leakage had been detected, but no corrective action had been taken.


LAFD PHOTO

Smoking ruins are all that remain after thunderclap explosion of more than six tons of organic peroxides inside truck parked in the Star Truck and Warehouse Corporation, 612 South Mateo Street. The 8:40 p.m., August 17, 1974, blast caused no injuries, but damaged 200 buildings in a 10-square block area.

The shipment was consigned to a City of Commerce fiberglass fabricator who declined a late Friday afternoon delivery. The trailer, loaded with its mighty time bomb and with its doors partially open for ventilation, was thereafter parked in Star's storage yard all Friday night and throughout Saturday in 85-degree temperatures, while the leaking organic peroxides permeated the cargo. And thus the countdown to disaster had begun.

When Chief Hill announced his intention to retire, effective May 31, 1975, Deputy Chief Kenneth R. Long was named emergency chief engineer until civil service procedures provided the fire commission with a list of three top candidates. Long topped the list of three and was named chief engineer on August 25, 1975. Born in Los Angeles, September 2, 1924, Long joined the department on July 15, 1947, after serving in the United States Coast Guard.

First assigned to Engine 28 on September 7, 1947, Long was promoted to captain, June 16, 1956, and was assigned to Engine 37. Eight years later he was named battalion chief and was first assigned to Battalion 11. Following appointment as assistant chief, July 3, 1968, Long was subsequently promoted to deputy fire chief in charge of fire suppression the following year on January 24, 1969. Unlike his two predecessors, Miller and Hill, whose major achievements prior to becoming chief engineer were largely in fire prevention bureau activities, Long's career had mostly been spent as a firefighter in virtually every area of the city.

The fire commission's naming of Long as the new chief engineer came during sad days for the department. Four days prior to the commission's announcement, the LAFD lost a member in the line of duty. Task Force 93 was part of a first alarm assignment responding to an early evening, August 21, 1975, call from the Motion Picture & Television Hospital in Woodland Hills, following a report that a Molotov cocktail had been tossed into the complex housing retired actors, actresses and other members of the Hollywood film community.

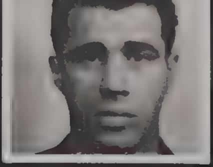
Kenneth R. Long served as chief engineer from June 1, 1975, until June 29, 1977.

While westbound on Ventura Boulevard, Truck 93's driver, Auto Fireman Kenneth R. Thompson, noticed a northbound Datsun sedan momentarily stop at the intersection of Winnetka Avenue. The motorist then entered the intersection directly in front of the old reserve aerial ladder truck. Thompson miraculously avoided a collision, but the truck jackknifed. Firefighter Dominic A. Pascal, 50, who was standing on the running board while clinging to a rail immediately behind Capt. Lewis J. Miller, Jr., was crushed between the tractor and aerial ladder. The car's driver did not stop. Pascal died in Rescue-Ambulance 100 while en route to Tarzana Hospital. The Woodland Hills alarm was false.

As every firefighter quickly learns, life on the job is a cycle of peaks and valleys; triumphs and frustrations. Saturday, December 6, 1975, without question, marked the supreme moment of satisfaction for Capt. Warner Lawrence, A-platoon skipper of Fireboat 2 for 28 of his more than 40 years as a member of the LAFD. That triumphal day was a long time in arriving.

In 1968, Hill, as cost-conscious a chief engineer as ever headed the LAFD, along with other advisors had decided that Boat 2 was too expensive to operate. It was, moreover, seldom used, especially as wooden wharves and waterfront structures

REQUIESCAT IN PACE



Firefighter Dominic A. Pascal
Truck 93
Died of injuries suffered when apparatus jackknifed while answering alarm
August 21, 1975

Remodeled in 1969, Fireboat 2 was equipped with stainless steel hydraulic guns, underwater maneuvering jets, large-capacity underwharf nozzles, plus other improvements. Glistening with its new equipment and its red-and-white colors, Boat 2 emerged from its quarters at Berths 226-227 Terminal Island. The boathouse and adjoining fire station was a harbor landmark until the LAFD centennial year when the building was demolished to meet harbor needs for more cargo-handling space. Boat 2 was relocated in temporary quarters at Berth 85, San Pedro, pending construction of a permanent station at Berth 86.

were gradually being replaced by those of fire-resistant construction. Hill made the final decision: Boat 2 was doomed to be sold for salvage.

Hill, several chief officers, and others met at Boat 2 for an afternoon meeting. After nearly four hours of outlining all the reasons why Boat 2 must be replaced by a smaller fireboat, Lawrence, the lowest-ranking officer present, was at last asked for his opinions. Lawrence knew full well why the meeting had been called and had thoroughly researched a plan to save the fireboat, although he knew that Hill, once he decided to do something, was notoriously difficult to convince otherwise. Lawrence recognized that a fireboat is a lot like insurance. You rarely make a claim on it and you hope to keep the annual costs low. But you are glad that you paid them when you need help in a hurry.

After more than a quarter of a century of assignment to Boat 2, Lawrence said a facelift was needed. He then proceeded to outline to Hill and the others his plan to cost-effectively modernize the boat at far less than the investment in a new boat and a smaller, less powerful, boat at that. By rebuilding Boat 2's controls, they could make the craft more quickly responsive and cheaper to operate. By switching the turrets to remote control operation, one firefighter could operate two turrets, instead of only one. By cutting the crew from 14 to eight, $100,000 a year would be saved. That investment would quickly offset the $238,000 cost of modernization. Obviously impressed by Lawrence's forethought, Hill changed his mind and agreed to the fireboat captain's plan.

Boat 2 went into San Pedro's Fellows and Stewart Shipbuilding Yard. Emerging a year later, Boat 2 was equipped with new stainless steel hydraulic turrets, underwater maneuvering jets, large-capacity underwharf nozzles, hydraulic steering, direct pilothouse control of engines and many other renovations. Further improvements, including the replacement of gasoline engines with diesels, continued.

On December 6, 1975, the boat celebrated its 50th birthday during a civic observance which attracted thousands to Boat 2's quarters and adjoining wharves and waterfront vantage points. Among those present was Mrs. Ralph J. Scott, widow of the chief engineer, who was largely responsible for acquiring the boat which went in service in 1925. The boat had been renamed the *Ralph J. Scott* during special ceremonies in May, 1965.

Sporting a birthday suit including a bright red-and-white hull and superstructure, brick-red decking, glistening nozzles and two huge hose reels covered with snappy red jackets, Boat 2 was escorted up and down the Main Channel by other fireboats in the fleet. With Captain Lawrence in the pilothouse, Boat 2 then demonstrated what it could do while its turrets gushed fountains which formed what fireboat firefighters refer to as a flower pot-like display.

Captain Lawrence was, himself, amazed as the boat put out nearly 20,000 gallons-of-water-per-minute. The powerful deluges caused the boat to tilt. Adding melodrama to the flower pot spectacle was the brilliant rainbow formed by the blending of the turrets' water mist with the early afternoon sun. Boat 2 is the oldest in-service apparatus in the LAFD and continued to hold that special recognition, long past the department's centennial celebration, while serving waterfront fire protection requirements.

A series of three more hazardous materials incidents following the Star Trucking explosion caused the department to realize it was ill-prepared to cope with this problem which was similarly alarming the entire fire service. At 9:07 p.m., April 10, 1975, Task Force 89, Engine 77 and Battalion 14 Chief Archer R. Morgan were dispatched to conflicting reports of a truck crash and fire on the northbound Hollywood Freeway near the transition road to the Golden State Freeway.

On arrival, Morgan found a truck and two overturned trailers well-involved in flames after going over the side of the Golden State Freeway near the interchange. The driver was gone and there was no legally-required placarding warning of hazardous materials on board. Recognizing the possibility of hazardous materials involvement, Morgan directed an upwind attack. The fierce flames caused Morgan to order additional water supply companies — Engines 81 and 24 — Crash 90 for foam, an air utility for extra air bottles and Helicopter 5 for aerial surveillance.

The stench of the thick black smoke told firefighters one of the trailers was loaded with rubber tires. The smell masked the odor of 12 tons of burning insecticide in plastic jugs in the other trailer. That toxic and flammable cargo was identified when Morgan's aide, Gerald Plumb, discovered plastic jugs thrown clear of the wreckage. Even with breathing apparatus and the upwind attack, firefighters began to show symptoms of ingestion or skin absorption of the insecticide's toxic vapors. Forty-three firefighters — 15 of whom were hospitalized — were transported to Pacoima Lutheran Hospital.

An even more bizarre hazardous materials problem occurred, January 15, 1976. Task Force 96 was the first-in company following a 7:16 a.m., report of a fire in the one-story tilt-up type commercial building at 20417 Nordhoff Street. Occupants included the Pacific Coast Lithograph Company, Nord Tek and Lago Galc, Inc., manufacturers of printed circuit boards. Task Force 96's initial sizeup: "We have a one-story industrial building, approximately 150-feet-by-250 feet well-involved . . . Send us two more task forces."

The first hint of severe problems occurred within minutes. Two firefighters wearing full turnouts and breathing apparatus exited the building and collapsed. Engineer Richard A. Engel of Engine 96, who was standing beside the pumper about

MIKE MEADOWS/LOS ANGELES TIMES

The smell of burning rubber tires spilled from an overturned and burning truck trailer on the Golden State Freeway, near the Hollywood Freeway interchange, masked the odor of 12 tons of blazing insecticide in a second trailer. Forty-three firefighters were treated for ingestion or skin absorption of toxic vapors during the April 10, 1975, incident.

40 feet from the front of the building, discovered that smoke was turning his red wiping rags bluish-green. What was this mysterious chemical reaction going on inside the fully-involved building that was puffing thick smoke? The occupancies were known to contain many chemicals, including large cylinders of chlorine and many carboys of hydrochloric acid. Despite the fact that nearly all firefighters were wearing breathing apparatus, more and more of them became sickened by the fumes.

Deputy Chief Junior Parker, taking command of fireground operations, ordered rescue-ambulances and, noticing the southerly drift of the smoke cloud, called for evacuation. Thousands of residents and school children in an area boundaried by Nordhoff on the north, Parthenia Street on the south, Oso Avenue on the east and Mason Avenue on the west were cleared from the area by police.

Although the fire, caused by a flash of solvent vapors in the Pacific Lithograph occupancy, was knocked down in only 32 minutes by 15 companies of firefighters, many puzzling questions would take days to unravel and, even then, not be totally resolved. Was defective or improper use of breathing apparatus a factor in sending 46 firefighters to hospitals? Or was the state-of-the-art of breathing apparatus such that it could not guarantee protection from all harmful vapors; much less guard against absorption through the skin? The answer to those questions was a qualified yes.

Of great interest to the department was a report of an emergency medical response team from the Los Angeles County Health Department, which indicated the complexities attendant to hazardous materials problems: "By the process of elimination ... investigations revealed the presence of unknown chlorinated hydrocarbons from the interaction of decomposed ABS (acrylonitrile, butadiene and styrene) thermo-setting resin and chlorine gas. Burning ABS plastic is known to evolve hydrogen cyanide gas. This toxic gas may have been the causative agent that resulted in the initial incapacitation of (firefighters) who were not wearing breathing apparatus. The team ascertained that the primary post fire problem was leaking chlorine gas from several cylinders."

The county report recommended better protective clothing for firefighters, including entry suits similar to the four loaned to the department during the fire by Atomics International. Also recommended were acquisition of better atmospheric measuring devices and a mobile unit with personnel educated and trained in chemistry, analytical instrumentation, equipped with special protective clothing and attuned to the infinite number of potentials resulting from hazardous materials involvement in fire or other emergency situations.

That report coincided with LAFD planning for exactly that type of vehicle, equipment and personnel. On June 18, 1976, the LAFD's first Mobile Laboratory left the department shops and shortly thereafter went in service under the supervision of Fire Prevention Bureau Inspector (later Captain) James L. Daneker, who holds a doctorate of pharmacology from the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science.

During the first year of service, this first lab of its kind in the nation's fire service, logged 75 runs, about half of them scientific investigations of incendiary fires, including the December 26, 1976, arson fire which killed 10 persons at the Aladdin Apartments. The teamwork between Mobile Lab personnel and arson investigators led to the arrest of the juvenile firesetter.

Before the Mobile Lab went in service, still another hazardous materials fire challenged firefighters and required difficult command decisions. Leslie's Pool Mart, Inc., dealers in swim-

ming pool chemicals, occupied a 40-by-110-foot, concrete block with wood-truss roof building at 7705 Balboa Boulevard. The firm mixed, packaged and stored 24 tons of chlorine and other chemicals, as was well-known by officers of Task Force 90, who had last inspected and pre-fire-planned the building. They had reported to the fire prevention bureau that hazardous materials storage exceeded legal limits.

This first-in company was at another incident when OCD received a report of a rubbish fire inside Leslie's. The 10:28 p.m., June 15, 1976, dispatch sent Engine 100, Task Force 73 (filling for 90's) and Battalion 10 Chief Richard Lewis. First-to-arrive Engine 100 found flames stabbing through the roof and a rapidly-growing cloud of smoke. Engine 100 immediately called for more help which included Task Force 90, Engines 83, 103 and 104, as well as Assistant Chief Dudley E. Sorenson of Division 3.

First-alarm companies unaware of the extent of hazardous materials inside the building which was outside their fire prevention inspection districts, began an exterior attack. Thirteen firefighters were quickly felled by chlorine gas. Atmospheric conditions pressed smoke close to the ground. Firefighters, quickly sensing they were being exposed to chlorine and other gases, immediately put on their breathing apparatus.

The erratic nature of those Friday night conditions resulted in a gigantic cloud of chlorine-gas-laden smoke which began drifting in unpredictable directions. As more firefighters began to show symptoms of chlorine gas poisoning, eight additional rescue-ambulances were called and Engine 104 was designated to supervise the setup of a medical command post. Twenty-nine firefighters were sent to hospitals.

When the smoke cloud worsened, Sorenson and Deputy Chief Junior Parker decided to evacuate a mobile home park bordering Leslie's as well as a gradually-expanding residential area. Ultimately, 5000 people in a four-square-mile area encompassing Hayvenhurst Avenue on the east; Reseda Boulevard on the west; Strathern and Saticoy Streets on the north and south were evacuated. Two police officers and 17 persons living in the area were treated at hospitals for chlorine exposure.

Engine trouble forced the pilot of a Mercer Enterprises charter DC-6 to attempt an emergency landing at Van Nuys Airport on the drizzling Sunday morning of February 8, 1976. Losing power, the aircraft with only a flight crew aboard, pancaked onto the Woodley Golf Course near the airport. The aircraft skipped a quarter-of-a-mile across the fairways, smashed through a starter's shack and stopped near Victory Boulevard and Hayvenhurst Avenue.

First-arriving firefighters thought they heard voices in the smashed cockpit. While Firefighter Pat Leddy of Truck 88 prepared to use a rotary saw to cut into the cockpit, Firefighter Raymond H. Walker of Task Force 90 and other firefighters laid a foam blanket and stood by with foam and water supply lines.

The saw, striking a stainless steel fitting, broadcast a shower of sparks which ignited vapors from leaking fuel. Firefighters standing inside the flames attempted to flee. Capt. Larry D. Parke of Engine 90 stumbled and fell into the fire. Parke, Walker and Apparatus Operator Thomas F. Schmitz of Task Force 90 suffered severe burns. Six other firefighters and Rescue-Ambulance 104 Operator Ronald A. Spiers, Jr., suffered less serious burns and smoke inhalation.

Later investigations showed the pilot, first officer and flight engineer died upon impact. Two stewardesses and a steward trainee escaped with minor injuries.

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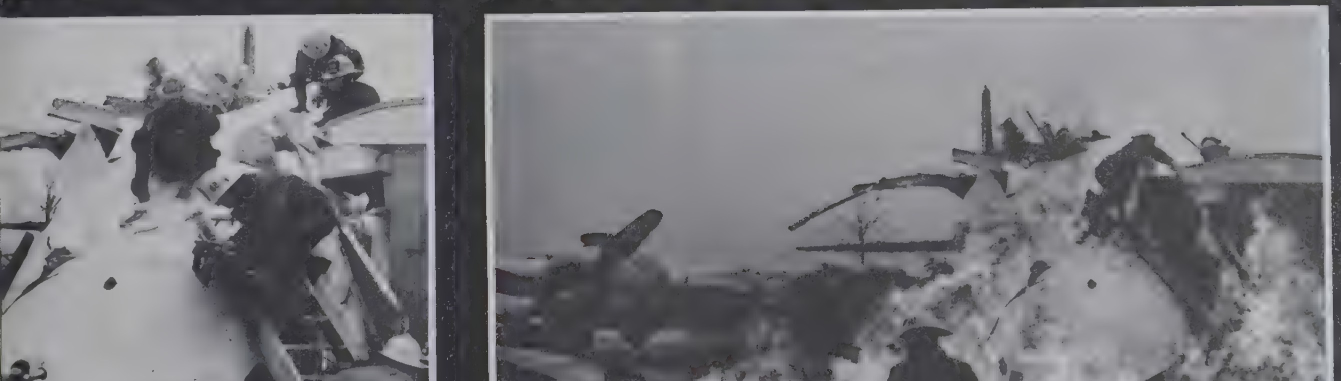


Command officers, meanwhile, had a difficult fire suppression choice. Continued use of water would only serve to worsen the chlorine gas cloud, because the mixture of water and chlorine would cause the vapor cloud to expand. Without fire stream attack, the chlorine would rapidly heat and result in the possibility of an explosion. The first option seemed to be the lesser of two evils.

Four master stream appliances were set up at 2 a.m., four hours into the fire, preparatory to a water blitz which would hopefully quickly snuff the fire and minimize the enlargement of the cloud. Shortly before the big punch was to be delivered, Sorenson and Parker decided that the fire seemed to be burning itself out. The situation was stabilizing and steadily improving. Master stream attack was not used. Soda ash was trucked in after daybreak and it neutralized the last remnants of the smoldering swimming pool chemicals.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF EDWIN J. CANFIELD

Battalion 8 Chief Edwin J. Canfield, Capt. Marvin Conley, Jr., of Engine 7 and six oil well workers were severely burned shortly after 5 a.m., August 13, 1967, when escaping natural gas suddenly flashed and engulfed this canopy-covered oil well derrick in flames. Canfield's clothing was burning as he staggered from the inferno. Thomas B. Stires, his aide, put out the flames by rolling Canfield in a mud puddle. Wagon batteries, ladder pipes and other master streams quickly knocked down the derrick fire in the Atlantic Richfield Corporation lease near Adams Boulevard and Figueroa Street. One of the oil well workers died of burns.

Alongside the Union Oil Company's bulk terminal at Berth 46, near the southerly tip of the harbor, the *S.S. Sansinena,* a 36-compartment tankship, was loading bunker fuel and ballast preparatory to an 11 p.m. departure, December 17, 1976. The Liberian tanker with its mostly Italian crew, had berthed the day before and off-loaded more than 20 million gallons of Indonesian light crude oil. The 810-foot-long, 70,620 deadweight ton tankship was, when launched in 1958, the largest vessel of its kind built in the United States.

The light capricious breeze made that evening balmy, but it also contributed to the formation of a hydrocarbon vapor cloud over the *Sansinena's* afterdeck. At 7:33 p.m. an unknown ignition source, probably near the midship deckhouse, ignited the cloud. The resulting explosions, which created damage in a radius of at least six miles, caused the *Sansinena* to break into pieces. Various witnesses described two explosions starting as camera flashbulb pops expanding into a geyser of flame and blazing oil.

The entire deck and midship deckhouse — about 500-feet long and weighing tens of thousands of tons — was lifted 750-feet out of the water and whanged down 200 yards away, crushing a guard shack and Security Officer Howard Dennis Charlton, whose body was never found. Blazing oil blanketed on-shore wreckage as well as the fore and aft sections of the *Sansinena.* The blasts were seen or felt as far distant as 45 miles. Debris rained down and damaged 260 pleasure boats in a nearby shipyard. Windows aboard the *Princess Louise* shattered and pelted Los Angeles Firemen's Relief Association Christmas partygoers with glass. Nobody was hurt.

Wagon 48 firefighters were nearing quarters when they felt the earthquake-like trembling of the explosions, saw the brilliant orange flash and mushrooming smoke cloud. Acting Capt. James W. Frances radioed OCD: "We've had a helluva explosion in the harbor." At Fire Station 48, Acting Battalion 6 Chief Leo Christensen heard and felt the blast as the concussion rocked the firehouse and shattered six windows on the second floor.

Christensen ran outside, took one look at the mammoth glare off toward the Outer Harbor and responded immediately, along with the balance of Task Force 48. Deluged with phone calls and radio messages, OCD had, at 7:40 p.m., dispatched Task Force 38, Engine 53, Engine 101 and all five fireboats. During the next 18 minutes, the initial attack force was beefed up with nine more task forces, nine rescue-ambulances, two helicopters, three triple combination pumpers, Light Water 100 and Crash 90 with its foam capabilities. Chief Engineer Long was helicoptered to the scene to assume command of the fire.

Task Force 48 and the other first-arriving land companies were slowed as they drove over and around *Sansinena* debris littering the huge Union Oil yard. Through the ferocious smoke and flames it was difficult to tell that an explosion-shattered tanker was shrouded in that caldron of fire. In one of his initial sizeups, Christenson radioed, "Fire on a 900-foot-front."

Long hose lays across the oil-slick yard were necessary as firefighters worked fast to cut off the spreading fire before it slopped over into the adjacent San Pedro Boat Works where $1.5 million worth of small vessels were moored. Their efforts were successful. The battle would last nearly three hours before the fire was contained.

The waterside problems were as desperate. Boat 5 was berthed at Fort McArthur, about half-a-mile upstream from the *Sansinena.* Debris rained upon the boat which was the first to arrive. The explosions had shoved the *Sansinena's* severed bow and stern sections more than 60 feet from the demolished reinforced concrete pier. Between these sections and the dock was an open expanse of water, much of it covered with flames from the burning oil.

As the three-man fireboat neared the *Sansinena's* stern, Fireboat Mate Walter L. Ball and Firefighters John Kemperman and Forrest E. Taylor heard cries for help coming from somewhere inside the smoke blanketing the blazing stern section. An ominously loud hissing strongly suggested the probability of more explosions.

Oblivious to the threat of explosions and the fire and smoke all around them, Mate Ball brought the boat in close as Firefighters Kemperman and Taylor rescued four crewmen from the water and saved 14 others who slid down ropes or jumped into the fireboat. Certain they had rescued all they could see, Ball sped to Berth 55 where Engine 101 had set up a medical command post for rescue-ambulance personnel who were triaging victims before they were sent to nearby hospitals. Ball, Kemperman and Taylor were awarded Medals of Valor for saving the 18 crewmen.

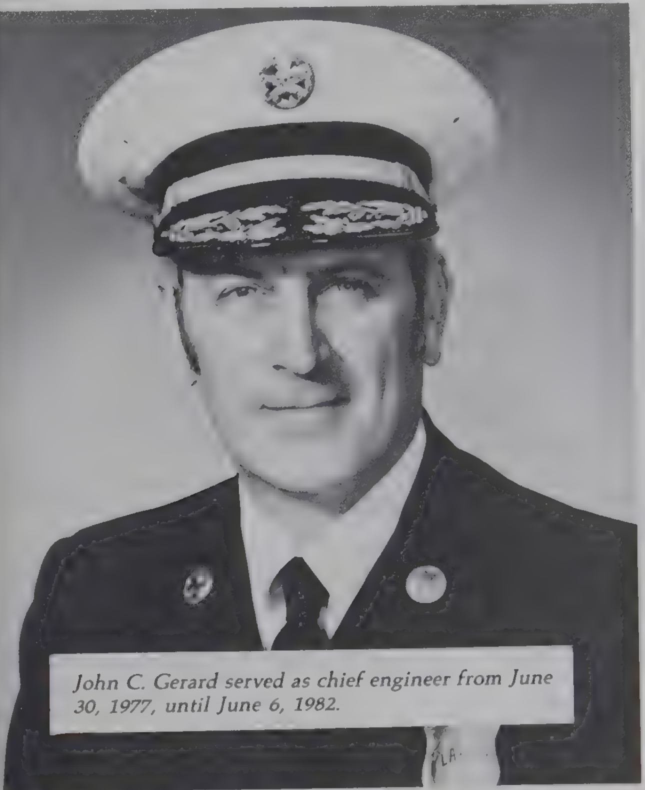
The remote location of the catastrophe and the quick work of firefighting and rescue-ambulance personnel were major conributing factors to the relatively low number of casualties: ine killed and 46 injured. A United States Coast Guard investigation put damages at $21.6 million and severely criticized he operating procedures, design features and poor maintennce aboard the 18-year old *Sansinena*.

Immediately following the disaster, the LAFD and the City Council developed new rules, regulations and procedures for nandling hazardous cargoes in the harbor. Fire suppression orces augmented fire prevention bureau inspections of all ankships carrying hazardous cargoes prior to approval for offloading to begin. The LAFD was the first department in the nation to inspect all tankships before permitting unloading.

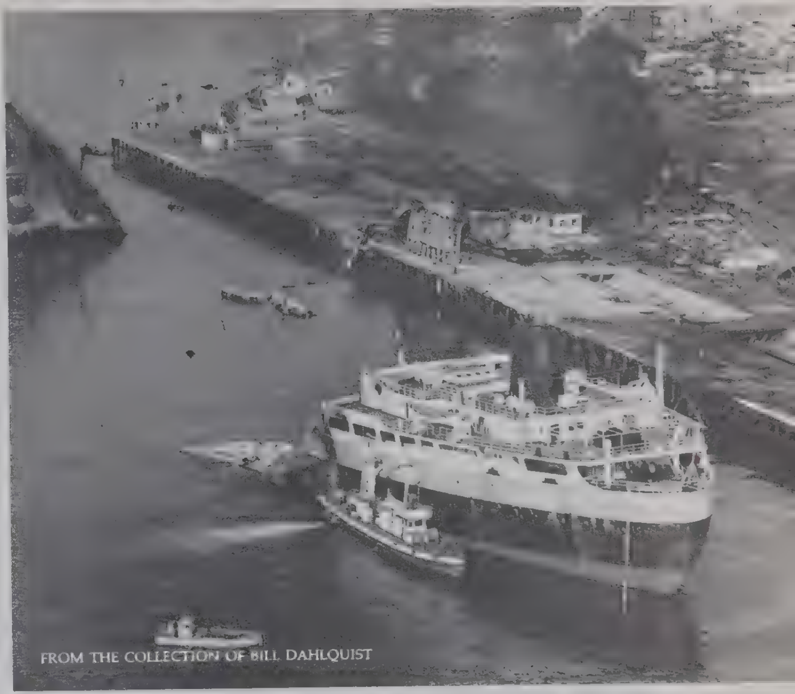
The *Sansinena* was the last major disaster Chief Engineer Long would command. On June 9, 1977, he stunned the mayor, the fire commission and firefighters with his surprise announcement that he would retire on July 1. Long's explanation was simple: He had served the department for 30 years and he desired to spend more time with his wife, Susan, and three children. Long, whose tenure was the shortest of any chief engineer in LAFD history, retired to Pebble Beach, California. In the LAFD's centennial year, Long said he was pursuing many interests, including classical music and his long desire to learn how to play the piano; notably transcriptions of works by Johann Sebastian Bach.

The civil service eligibility list, which Long headed when he was chosen chief engineer, was still valid. From among the top three names on that list, the commission on June 30, 1977, appointed Deputy Chief John C. Gerard, fire marshal and head of the fire prevention bureau. The move seemed to signal the return to the traditional selection of chief engineers from among those with extensive fire prevention bureau experience.

Gerard, 46, was born in St. Louis and was first assigned to Truck 34, after joining the LAFD on June 16, 1953. Most of his fire suppression assignments were in the metropolitan and San Fernando Valley areas of the city. Promoted to auto fireman, September 23, 1958, Gerard was assigned to Truck 4 and went to Engine 61 when he moved up to engineer, January 29, 1963. Named captain on August 20, 1964, Gerard was initially assigned to Engine 46.



John C. Gerard served as chief engineer from June 30, 1977, until June 6, 1982.



FROM THE COLLECTION OF BILL DAHLQUIST

The morning after one of the worst firefighting nights in the history of Los Angeles Harbor: At 7:38 p.m., December 17, 1976, the SS Sansinena exploded at the Union Oil Company's bulk terminal at Berth 46. The force pushed the bow and stern sections 60 feet away from the dock. The entire deck and midship deckhouse weighing tens of thousands of tons, was blown 750-feet out of the water and landed in the Union Oil Complex. Smoke continues to billow from the area where the decking whanged down. The explosion and resulting fire killed nine persons and injured 46.

Following his August 2, 1970 promotion to battalion chief, Gerard's first assignment was to Battalion 17 in the valley. It was during this period of his career that he was awarded a Medal of Valor for his attempts to rescue victims of the June 24, 1971, Sylmar tunnel disaster. Gerard thus became, along with Chief Engineer Eley, the second chief engineer to be cited for heroism up to the time of the LAFD's first century of service.

With his promotion to assistant chief, March 18, 1973, Gerard was put in command of the supply and maintenance division. On February 2, 1975, Gerard was promoted to deputy chief and became the city's fire marshal and head of the fire prevention bureau. During his first months in office, the department completed acquisition of 22 Ward LaFrance triple combination pumpers, an additional light water foam apparatus, 13 replacement rescue-ambulances and a new crash rig for Los Angeles International Airport. Six Thibault aerial ladder trucks, built in Canada, had proven to be unsafe and were retro-fitted with new 100-foot Seagrave metal aerial ladders.

There was an additionally new look in the department when the first three women to wear LAFD uniforms graduated, February 19, 1978, from the 22-member paramedic training class: Carlesta Johnson, who was assigned to Rescue-Ambulance 27; Suzanne M. Trousseau, to Rescue-Ambulance 22 and Sally Byrne, to Rescue-Ambulance 10. Theirs was not an altogether easy transition into the traditional domain of men. The three women knew that as much, if not more, than their male fire station colleagues as they strove to overcome skepticism and resentment.

Rites of passage from rookie to a fully-accepted member of the department is traditional in most fire departments and often involves various forms of hazing. On the night of October 18, 1978, an incident of this kind escalated into a situation between Paramedic Byrne and six male firefighters at Fire Station 10. The firefighters involved were disciplined and Byrne resigned from the department four years later.

These first LAFD women paramedics pioneered paths which led to 33 women paramedics in LAFD fire stations and training assignments at the time of the department's 100th birthday. Evidence that traditions can be broken and opportunities opened for all, is testified to by the fact that Mrs. Carlesta Johnson Wells was the first black female paramedic to become the first female drill instructor. Proving their capabilities, seven women paramedics had earned promotions by the LAFD's centennial.

Before he became chief engineer, Gerard and other fire protection experts were becoming increasingly alarmed by residential fires resulting in fatalities and injuries. It is a maxim that if you are going to die in a fire, it will most likely occur in your own home while you are asleep. The likelihood is equally strong that you will be dead before the arrival of firefighters.

That recognition had spurred the development of a home fire detector industry whose various types of alarms were proliferating in the marketplace, along with claims which were largely unproven. In 1977, only two out of 10 homes in the United States had some form of fire detection. Four years later, industry and fire service encouragement of home fire detectors resulted in their installation in half the nation's households.

Gerard and other fire protection authorities were asking: How reliable were these detectors? Did they sound a sufficiently audible alert in a timeframe which would enable occupants of a house to escape, especially when those people were sleeping? Was that escape time improved by the use of ionization or photoelectric types of smoke detectors? Were mechanically-operated, fixed temperature heat detectors better than the other two types?

Homes were being furnished with far more flammables, many of them of severe toxic nature under fire conditions.

LAFD PHOTO

Smoke gushes from bedroom of abandoned home at 419 Napoleon Street, Playa del Rey, during one of the many highly-instrumented test fires starting on May 17, 1978. The fire scenarios were designed to determine the dynamics of typical house fires and how quickly and effectively heat and smoke detectors functioned.

LAFD PHOTO

Inspector Alfred D. Brekke positions smoke detectors preliminary to a series of test fires to determine the reliability and effectiveness of home smoke and heat detectors. Some 1200 detectors were tested under actual fire conditions and the results were recorded for later analysis.

What levels of heat, oxygen, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide and smoke could be anticipated when home fires occurred? What were the best locations and applications for the various types of residential fire detectors? Should people sleep with their bedroom doors open or closed?

Reminiscent of the LAFD's widely-acclaimed *Operation School Burning* program, Gerard and other experts, within and outside the LAFD, decided the only way to learn answers to those questions was to study the dynamics of fires in residences equipped with fire detector devices. As with *Operation School Burning,* typical fires would be set in houses scientifically-instrumented and simultaneously observed visually and by videotaping.

The testing was jointly-sponsored by the California Fire Chiefs Association and the LAFD. Fourteen consultants and 74 organizations from the public and private sectors provided expertise, fire detectors, instrumentation, other necessary services and supplies to insure the utmost objectivity and accuracy. Industry representatives supplied some 1200 detectors which were randomly-selected from distributors' warehouses.

Four abandoned, modern-style houses owned by the Los Angeles Department of Airports in the Playa del Rey section of the city were made available, prior to their eventual demolition to meet the needs of Los Angeles International Airport. Gerard assigned Battalion Chief Donald O. Manning of the fire prevention bureau and Wayne M. Martin, an LAFD fire protection engineer, as project director and assistant director, respectively. Eleven basic test scenarios representing typical fatal residential fires during night and early morning hours as statistically shown by the California State Fire Marshal's fire incident and reporting system, were developed. Most would be repeated three times to better-insure definitive findings.

Following months of preparations, the first test fire was set May 17, 1978, in a one-story, three-bedroom dwelling with a typical central hall floor plan at 419 Napoleon Street. By sheer coincidence, the house was two residences west of where Gerard and his family had lived. The burn house itself formerly was the residence of Gerard's neighbor, Paul Ditzel.

The fully-furnished house at 419 Napoleon was completely instrumented. Data produced by the test fires would be elecronically-transmitted to recording and other measuring devices in a garage set up at as command center next door to the Napoleon address. Test fires on Napoleon continued until July 20. Fire apparatus stood by to extinguish fires at the end of each test when the house would be re-outfitted for the next fire.

The other house selected was a two-story abandoned dwelling at 111 Palace Street. It had a basement common to midwestern and eastern communities. As with the Napoleon tests, the house was completely-furnished and fully-instrumented. Data was sent to a command post in an operations control room next door at 105 Palace Street. Test fires on Palace began August 23, 1978, and continued until November 3, 1978.

The 71 test fires generated in excess of two million pieces of data, all of which was recorded on oscillographs or strip charts. Detectors were individually wired to digital clocks. Light beams and chart recordings were utilized to measure smoke obscuration. Other recorders monitored temperature rises at several locations in the houses. Environmental gas-sampling equipment and chart recorders sampled and recorded levels of oxygen, carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide. Audio cassette and videotape equipment with time and date generators recorded each test fire.

The resulting computerized data analysis was made under a contract between the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and the California State University, Los Angeles, with assistance from the LAFD. Funding was provided by the IAFC and the United States Fire Administration. Included among the major conclusions were:

1. At least one smoke detector is essential. More are even better.

2. Photoelectric detectors provide maximum warning against smoke buildup which is the most critical factor in fire deaths.

3. Sensitivity of detectors varies considerably among brands within each category of smoke detector.

4. Smoke detectors — photoelectric or ionization — are more reliable than heat detectors as early-warning devices for dwelling fires.

5. Heat detectors alone may provide no escape time.

6. Maximum protection is afforded by sleeping with bedroom doors closed and smoke detectors installed in the bedroom and in the hallway immediately outside the bedroom door.

7. Placement of a smoke detector in the living room significantly increases escape time.

8. Smoke detectors in the attic provide little improvement in escape time.

The Palace site was used in the summer of 1979 for 60 home sprinkler system tests under a grant from the United States Fire Administration. The studies resulted in a new National Fire Protection Association standard pertaining to sprinkler systems in one and two-family dwellings and mobile homes. In part, the standard requires a system to provide a discharge rate of at least 18 gallons-per-minute from any single operating sprinkler head. The standard also specifies that the maximum area of single sprinkler head protection should not exceed an area of 12-feet-by-12-feet.

Except for the steady rain, there appeared to be nothing unusual that Wednesday morning, March 1, 1978, during scheduled takeoff and landing operations by commercial jetliners at Los Angeles International Airport, one of the world's busiest. In its more than 32 years of operation, there had never been a passenger killed in a commercial airliner crash on the field.

At Fire Station 80, where most of the airport's crash and rescue apparatus was based, Task Force Commander Bob Engel was leading a routine blackboard training exercise showing how to rescue passengers trapped aboard a burning aircraft. Engel, with more than 20 years of experience as an airport crash-rescue expert, was one of the nation's foremost authorities on these highly-specialized techniques.

Alongside Runway 6-Right, two miles north of 80's, was satellite Fire Station 80 North, where two other highly-trained air crash firefighters, Jim McJannet and Tommy Kaiser, were based with CB-1, a 1968 Walter Motor Truck carrying 3000 gallons of water and 500 gallons of light water foam concentrate. McJannet watched as Continental Airlines DC-10 Flight 603, Honolulu-bound, with 198 people aboard and a load of 81,000 gallons of Jet-A (kerosine) fuel, taxied to the end of Runway 6-Right.

Cleared for takeoff at 9:23, the sleek jet roared down the runway while accelerating to liftoff speed. At 179-miles-per-hour, the two front tires on the left main landing gear blew apart. McJannet saw large chunks of rubber peeling from the wheels as the jet streaked past the fire station. "Blown tires!

FROM THE COLLECTION OF KENNETH GUSTAFSON

Years of aircraft crash firefighting and rescue training paid off, March 1, 1978, when a Continental Airlines DC-10 crashed on takeoff from Los Angeles International Airport. Although more than 10,000 gallons of fuel instantly ignited, Crash 80 firefighters saved all but three of the 198 passengers and crew while extinguishing the massive fire in only six minutes after the crash.

Let's roll!" McJannet flipped the ringdown line, which set off alarm bells to alert firefighters at Crash 80, as he ran to join Kaiser. They pulled out of the station, turned right onto Taxiway U and raced toward the gigantic column of thick, black smoke, ringed by flames, that was billowing from the airliner. McJannet radioed OCD for five more task forces.

The satellite station's signal that there was an emergency at the north end of the field sent Crash 80's firefighters scrambling for their apparatus as the hotline from the control tower simultaneously rang. "You've got an Alert 33: Aircraft on fire . . . East end of Runway 6-Right," said the tower operator. Crash 80's apparatus peeled out of the station.

First came the Rapid Intervention Vehicle (RIV) with Engel and firefighters aboard. As its name implied, the 1977 Walter accelerated from zero to 55-miles-an-hour in 22 seconds. Aboard were 500 gallons of pre-mixed foam and 500 pounds of dry, fire extinguishing chemicals. Following close behind came CB-2 and CB-3, identical apparatus to the CB-1 and a 1500-gallon-per-minute Crown pumper. Seeing the loomup, Engel radioed for rescue-ambulances.

As CB-1 streaked down the taxiway it was obvious to Kaiser and McJannet that the Continental's captain and first officer had been unable to successfully abort the takeoff or slow the jet before it overshot the runway. The left landing gear collapsed and caused the left wing to scrape the ground. The weight of the plane caused the right gear to gouge a long, deep trench in the rain-softened ground. The jet had veered to the left and stopped short of a parking lot and buildings. More than 10,000 gallons of kerosine fuel gushing from the ruptured wing tanks had almost instantly ignited.

Towering puffs of thick, black smoke and boiling flames almost completely encircled the jet. Luckily, the fuselage remained intact, but many passengers and crew were trapped in a metal cocoon surrounded by flames and smoke. Terrified passengers rushed to the four escape doors on each side of the fuselage. Cabin personnel yelled at them not to open the left doors where flames and smoke were most severely impinging upon that side of the fuselage. But the four doors were nevertheless opened and the escape chutes automatically flopped out. The polyester, non-fire-resistant chutes were quickly destroyed by the intense heat; ending any hope of safe escape from that side of the plane.

An elderly couple opened the escape door over the right wing. Stepping onto the wing, they slipped or fell to the ground and were asphyxiated. The four right side doors were opened and the chutes spilled out. Because the jet was tilting at a sharp angle as it lay on its left wing, there was a wide gap between the end of the chutes and the ground. Passengers began sliding down them and hit the ground. Many suffered broken bones and other injuries while smoke and flames billowed around them.

As CB-1 neared the crash, Kaiser switched one of the apparatus' twin diesel engines from drive to the 750-gallon-per-minute pumping mode. McJannet pushed a dashboard lever that opened the foam valve. Within 10 seconds, a pre-set proportion of 6 percent light water foam and 94 percent water was ready for discharge from the roof-mounted turret.

Slowing to dodge debris, Kaiser approached from the tail. When they were 150 feet from the plane, McJannet pushed a button on the hydraulically-operated turret and foam began spewing onto the flames around the tail. Holes along the turret's barrel caused the foam to aerate. As each gallon of foam-and-water gushed from the turret, this aeration resulted in rapid expansion. One gallon of water and light water foam expanded into eight-to-10 gallons of extinguishing agent.

McJannet continued the foam deluge as Kaiser brought the CB closer to the plane. Except for their fine-tuned training, they could easily have been tempted to attack the fire on the left side of the plane where flames were worsening. This was not what the job called for. Noting that the wind was from the east and blowing smoke and flames toward the left side of the jet, they knew their best initial attack was from the right side. As they passed the tail section, McJannet shot a solid burst of foam which snuffed the heavy body of fire in that area and around the right rear escape door.

Coming around to the right side of the plane, McJannet and Kaiser were startled. There were between eight and 12 people between the wing and the tail. All of them were on fire. They were trying to beat out the flames with their hands. An elderly woman was totally on fire. She was running in circles, while two men — themselves burning — were trying to grab her. She ran under the belly of the plane just as McJannet opened up the turret. He sprayed an umbrella of foam which instantly doused the flames on the people.

McJannet alternated with a straight stream played over their heads to shower them, arched the stream so it bounced off the fuselage to cool it and protect passengers still inside and put out some of the ground fire beneath the aircraft. Pointing the turret downward, McJannet swept the flames and unburned fuel under the belly of the aircraft and thus opened a fire-free escape path for the passengers evacuating the plane.

McJannet and Kaiser quickly became aware of other foam streams arching over the fuselage and knew the other crash rigs had arrived. The RIV pulled in immediately behind the tail, where Captain Engel could best see and direct operations on both sides of the aircraft. RIV Turretman Cliff Olson triggered a burst of foam to protect passengers escaping from the rear door. As flames licked out from under the fuselage, the RIV shot another burst of foam through its 350-gallon-per-minute roof-mounted turret and knocked them down.

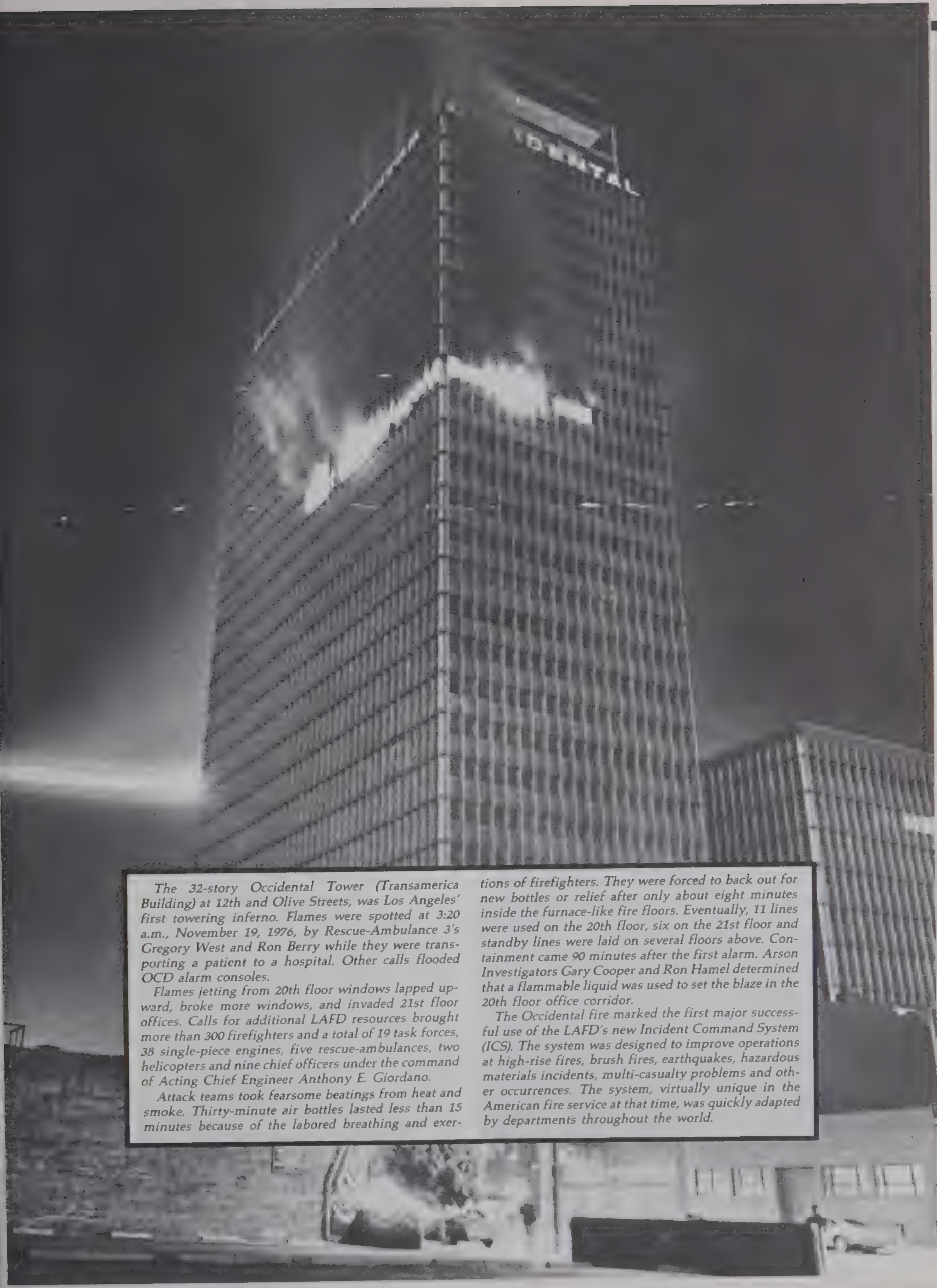
CB-3, meanwhile, came in where the fire was most intense. Engineer Jim Dunn pulled in close as Turret Operator Bob Bonk pressed the button which released the foam. The 750-gallon-per-minute discharge had little effect upon the mass of flames and smoke boiling high above the aircraft. Bonk switched the turret to blabbermouth mode to provide a fan-like spray. That did not do the job, either.

Using their foam-spewing ground-sweeps mounted under the front bumper, CB-3's crew drove the blazing fuel away from them as they switched the pump to 1500-gallons-per-minute operation. This enormous cascade of expanding foam bored into the flames, splattered against the wreckage and drove a deadly blow to the heart of the flames raging from the area around the left engine and shattered fuel tanks.

Captain George Hurst, meanwhile, pulled his CB-2 in near the CB-3. Turret Operator Charles Wakefield opened up the turret which also delivered a powerful punch. Knockdown of the flames quickly followed. CB-2 then moved around the left wing tip to take up a new position where Wakefield attacked the remaining pocket of fire under the left engine. Crash firefighters from the RIV and CB-1 rapidly stretched one-and-one-half-inch hoselines from reels on their rigs and completed extinguishment with a combination of foam and dry chemicals.

While firefighting efforts were rapidly making headway, Capt. Gerry Halstead and his four firefighters of Engine 80 dashed into the blanket of foam. Captain Halstead found the elderly woman who had been running in circles. She was lying under the fuselage, but was still alive. Halstead carried her out, while Engine 80's other firefighters continued to enter the foam blanket and bring out victim upon victim.

Captain Engel ordered Firefighters Woody Woodward and Jerald Hutchings to ladder the pilot's compartment and search the plane for passengers and crew. The smoke was down to their knees and was thick and toxic. There were no passengers or crew still aboard. Woodward was later hospitalized for three



The 32-story Occidental Tower (Transamerica Building) at 12th and Olive Streets, was Los Angeles' first towering inferno. Flames were spotted at 3:20 a.m., November 19, 1976, by Rescue-Ambulance 3's Gregory West and Ron Berry while they were transporting a patient to a hospital. Other calls flooded OCD alarm consoles.

Flames jetting from 20th floor windows lapped upward, broke more windows, and invaded 21st floor offices. Calls for additional LAFD resources brought more than 300 firefighters and a total of 19 task forces, 38 single-piece engines, five rescue-ambulances, two helicopters and nine chief officers under the command of Acting Chief Engineer Anthony E. Giordano.

Attack teams took fearsome beatings from heat and smoke. Thirty-minute air bottles lasted less than 15 minutes because of the labored breathing and exertions of firefighters. They were forced to back out for new bottles or relief after only about eight minutes inside the furnace-like fire floors. Eventually, 11 lines were used on the 20th floor, six on the 21st floor and standby lines were laid on several floors above. Containment came 90 minutes after the first alarm. Arson Investigators Gary Cooper and Ron Hamel determined that a flammable liquid was used to set the blaze in the 20th floor office corridor.

The Occidental fire marked the first major successful use of the LAFD's new Incident Command System (ICS). The system was designed to improve operations at high-rise fires, brush fires, earthquakes, hazardous materials incidents, multi-casualty problems and other occurrences. The system, virtually unique in the American fire service at that time, was quickly adapted by departments throughout the world.

BORIS YARO LOS ANGELES TIMES

days for smoke poisoning. Ten other crash firefighters suffered kerosine burns after unburned fuel soaked their turnouts.

The time sequence from the initial alarm by McJannet at 9:25 a.m., until more than 10,000 gallons of flaming kerosine were extinguished and 198 passengers and crew either ran to safety or were carried there by firefighters was to become an everlasting testimonial to the excellence of the LAFD's airport fire protection. CB-1 was at the crash and in foam operation in around 90 seconds after the first alarm. The flames were controlled in about one minute after that. Total extinguishment was accomplished six minutes after the crash.

The emergency medical problems attendant to the crash also put paramedics in an exemplary light. Rescue-Ambulance 5 arrived within five minutes after the crash. Paramedics Ron Sapp and Otto Miller immediately set up a medical command post, established a triaging area and began evaluating injuries and giving priority aid to the most badly injured victims as 10 additional LAFD rescue-ambulances quickly arrived to join in the teamwork. The first victims were on their way to hospitals within 15 minutes after the crash. Paramedic and private ambulances took more than 43 injured to hospitals and the multi-casualty medical emergency was over in less than an hour when the last of the patients was transported to a hospital.

Taxpayers had grown to expect firefighters and paramedics to routinely bring about miracles, such as the one at the airport. There had, however, been increasing public uproar over the costs of all government services as reflected in taxes. As far as the LAFD was concerned, that matter first surfaced in 1976 when Chief Engineer Hill, in response to the cost-cutting movement, reduced manpower staffing from five to four firefighters on 57 companies during the hours from 8 p.m., until 8 a.m. He was immediately challenged. During the battle that ensued, Local 112 of the Los Angeles City Fire Fighters, homeowners groups and retired LAFD officers and firefighters, took their case for restoration of the cutbacks to the public.

"Any reduction of manpower to less than five per company is a drastic mistake," said retired Chief Engineer Miller. The City Council overrode Mayor Bradley's veto of the restoration and manpower staffing was returned to its previous level.

Following a 2:11 p.m., alarm, March 28, 1971, Task Force 37 was the first company to arrive at this major high-rise fire in Monty's, a bar and restaurant on the 21st floor of the Westwood Center Building, 1100 Glendon Avenue, Westwood. The fire was knocked down in about 30 minutes, thanks to pre-planning and the LAFD's well-developed high-rise firefighting procedures.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF KENNETH GUSTAFSON

Six persons perished and 24 were injured, shortly after 10:34 a.m., June 16, 1976, when a bulldozer slashed an underground gasoline pipeline and touched off a massive fire at Venice Boulevard and Bagley Avenue in the Mar Vista district of West Los Angeles. Fed by 60,000 gallons of gasoline, flames destroyed six structures on the north side of the 9500-block of Venice Boulevard.

On June 6, 1978, however, Californians approved Proposition 13, which was to have an everlasting impact upon state and local government services of all kinds. For the LAFD, it meant that engine company manpower was reduced to four men and truck companies to five firefighters. Through attrition and retirements, the department lost 300 firefighters and 17 civilian employees. Proposition 13 severely hurt nearly every phase of the LAFD's operations, including normal apparatus replacement programs and many planned new fire stations.

Battalion 16 in the harbor was closed and became part of Battalion 6. Battalion 8 also was eliminated and its companies in south central Los Angeles were apportioned among surrounding battalions. Proposition 13 also resulted in a $10 million LAFD budget reduction during fiscal 1978-1979. The lower property taxes resulting from Proposition 13 and the subsequent department reduction in services seriously impacted morale.

Many officers and firefighters chose retirement. Included among them were two officers, Captain Engel, who had trained the firefighters who had directed the miracle on Runway 6-Right and the department's foremost hazardous materials authority at that time, Battalion Chief Leo J. Najarian.

Studies subsequent to the implementation of Proposition 13, July 1, 1978, showed a severe rise in exposure fires and considerably more greater alarm fires. These findings strongly inferred that the reduced numbers of firefighters answering first alarms were unable to prevent many fires from spreading to adjacent buildings. More greater alarms were called, not be-use of the severity of the fire, but because of the need for ore manpower. Other studies showed line-of-duty injuries creased as short-staffed companies were forced to handle eavy hoses, ladders and other equipment while performing re suppression duties which were strenuous and exhausting r the manpower as they were prior to the passage of Proposi- on 13.

A fire service tradition, explainable only among firefighters id those closest to them, is that despite job-related problems, w morale and a sense that the citizens they protect do not ppreciate their efforts, firefighters put aside these frustrations hen the alarm sounds. Somehow, firefighters make do with hat resources they have. Never in the history of the LAFD as that better-illustrated than during the events which oc- urred October 23, 1978, when 646 fire companies from as far way as San Francisco, were committed to Santa Ana-whipped rush fires which raged in Los Angeles, Riverside and San ernardino Counties.

With temperatures soaring above 86 degrees, relative humid- y at 8 percent and Santa Ana winds gusting up to 40-miles- er-hour, the entire LAFD went on disaster alert under these xtreme fire hazard conditions. Companies began moving into nd around brush areas and helicopters went on fire patrol. hortly after 9:30 that morning, the winds blew down power nes which, in a flurry of sparks, fell into pre-heated brush ear Mulholland Drive and the San Diego Freeway. At 9:41 .m., OCD dispatched a double assignment of apparatus, in- luding first-due Engine 109. On-scene three minutes later, ngine 109 firefighters found four acres involved near the Bel- ir Presbyterian Church and School. Captain Jim Goodenow f Engine 109 immediately called for help and Engineer Gary helford and Firefighters Roy Ward and Keith Pearcy started n initial attack on the fast-spreading flames. The school was vacuated.

Pushed by the fierce winds, the flames spread southwesterly nto Mandeville Canyon's brush and thickly-populated resi- ential area. Still more companies were ordered into the area, ook up battlelines, but were driven backwards. Blazing hunks of brush in areas containing up to 40 tons of chaparral uel per acre, seeded fires a quarter-of-a-mile and more beyond ire lines. At 10:11 a.m., the LAFD declared a major emergency nd at noon began to recall off-duty firefighters. Command osts and apparatus staging areas were set up as strike teams onsisting of five engines and a chief officer in charge, wound p the steep roads and streets leading into the rugged terrain of he Santa Monica Mountains.

The flames continued virtually unchecked and, at times, apriciously reversed themselves to pose new problems for irefighters attempting to save homes; most of them with vood-shingle roofs and therefore ripe for burning. The battle, ost before it started, continued throughout the afternoon and nto the evening. Firefighters had no choice but to surrender ome homes to the flames so they could save countless others. Helicopters made hundreds of water drops. Still the onslaught ontinued. By the time an offshore breeze finally helped fire- ighters, the blaze had carved a 6130-acre burn in a 15-mile erimeter extending from the San Diego Freeway to Pacific Palisades, just short of the Pacific Ocean.

There were two viewpoints of the fire which was not con- ained until early the following afternoon. There was the fire- ighters' and that of some Pacific Palisades homeowners. The irefighters could show that of 9154 homes nestled among the all brush in extremely difficult, if not wholly-inaccessible reas, only 30 were destroyed and 20 damaged. Thirty-one of he homes had combustible wood-shake and shingle roofs.

BORIS YARO/LOS ANGELES TIMES

LAFD helicopter is silhouetted by flames sweeping through Big Tujunga Canyon area, November 24, 1975. The Santa Ana-wind-driven flames destroyed seven homes in Kagel Canyon and 12 more in Glendale.

The LAFD had indeed accomplished another miracle, but it ook 157 engine companies, five helicopters, four bulldozers nd hundreds of firefighters to do it. The 157 LAFD companies and the more than 900 firefighters deployed on the Mandeville fire was the largest commitment of apparatus and manpower to a single incident in the history of the LAFD. During that day, moreover, the department answered 314 other fire calls, including 13 greater alarm fires, while paramedics responded to 480 incidents. The Mandeville fire, moreover, called out four Los Angeles County Fire Department engines and 20 pumpers from the California Department of Forestry.

A differing viewpoint was expressed by some Pacific Palisades residents who sharply criticized the LAFD for the loss of homes in that area. Chief Engineer Gerard appeared at a meeting of homeowners, explained the complex problems attendant to a brush fire of this magnitude and under Santa Ana conditions. Those problems, said Gerard, were compounded by the Proposition 13 manpower cutbacks. The homeowners were not placated.

By 1978, arson had become the fastest-growing crime in the United States. The reasons for the phenomena were as complex as they were varied. Most law enforcement agencies put a low priority on incendiary fires, unless death or serious injuries resulted. Arson is, moreover, a uniquely difficult crime to prove to the point where convictions are likely. Given the high incidence of fires of suspicious nature and the less than two dozen arson investigators in the LAFD, the problem was acute. Compounding the situation was public apathy. The prevailing opinion that all fire losses, even if incendiary in cause, were covered by insurance was a commonly-held belief.

On October 5, 1978, Mayor Bradley, at the suggestion of Chief Gerard, appointed an Arson Suppression Task Force. Members, under Chairman Gerard, included officials from the LAFD and area fire departments, local, state and federal law enforcement agencies, the judiciary, school authorities, media executives and community representatives. One of the first major activities of the Arson Task Force was the development of a public awareness program by a committee headed by Paul Ditzel. With funding largely derived from the public sector, the committee wrote and produced an arson awareness pamphlet. California's annual Fire Service Day, May 12, 1979, was declared Arson Suppression Day. Using the theme, "With Your Help, We're More Than a Match for Arson," 60,000 pamphlets were distributed among visitors to LAFD stations on Fire Service Day and 30,000 more were given at fire stations in 20 other fire departments throughout the Los Angeles basin.

The arson theme was flashed on stadium scoreboards throughout the Los Angeles area and was emblazoned upon the 1978-1979 LAFD annual report. An hour-long arson documentary, hosted by Randy Mantooth, co-star of the *Emergency* television series, was produced by Channel 9 and repeatedly shown. Newspaper and magazine feature articles were prepared and radio spot announcements distributed to stations which broadcast them as a public service.

Capt. Patrick McGuinness, commander of the LAFD arson section and Ditzel also worked with telephone officials in establishing California's first statewide toll-free arson tipster hotline: 1-800-47-ARSON. The hotline went in service on July 13, 1980. Los Angeles' multi-media approach to arson awareness was utilized by the federal government while developing guidelines for other cities forming arson public awareness programs.

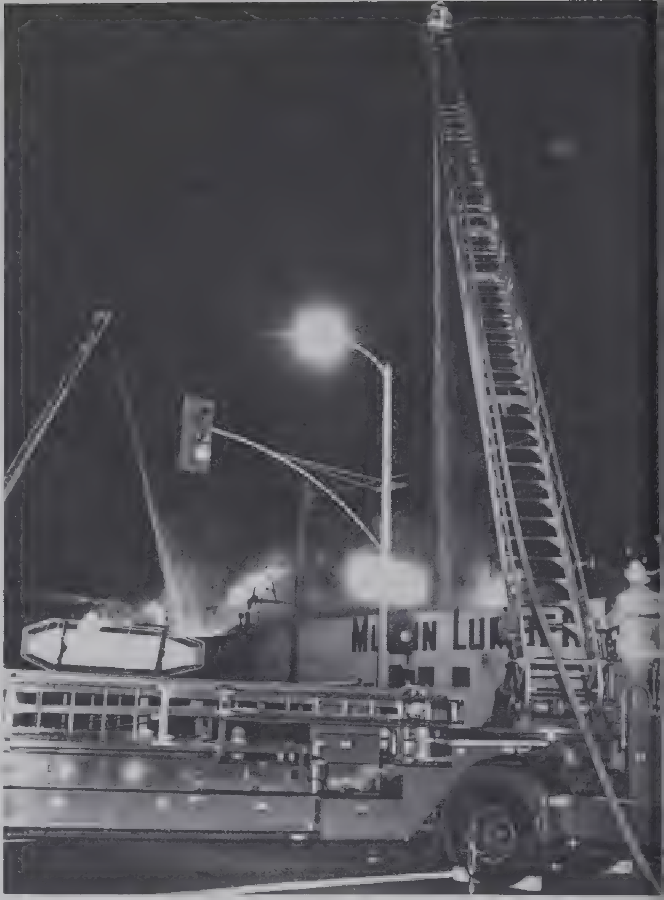
Arson was forcefully brought to the public's attention when two firefighters were killed while battling incendiary fires which occurred only 17 days apart. Around 7 p.m., April 25, 1979, two burglars forced entry to the sprawling Mullin Lumber Company, 7151 Lankershim Boulevard at Sherman Way in North Hollywood. Using metal cutters, they slit a roof vent and wire screening over the main office which contained a safe. They then lowered themselves inside. At 7:00 p.m., a burglar alarm from the Mullin yard was received in the office of Morse Signal Devices. Security officers and police were notified. Thirteen minutes later, OCD began getting calls of a fire inside the lumber yard and dispatched a larger-than-normal assignment of apparatus, including Task Force 89 and Task Force 102. First-due Task Force 89 saw the loomup almost immediately upon leaving quarters and radioed for more companies. Soon, a total of 17 companies were answering the major emergency alarm, as soaring flames fed upon large stacks of finished lumber stored inside a shed immediately north of the office building.

Truck 89 began aerial ladder pipe operation on Lankershim Boulevard near the fully-involved shed. At the corner of Sherman Way and Lankershim, Truck 102 was spotted and its aerial was raised. Firefighter Brian E. Phillips climbed the aerial which was extended about 50 feet to position the ladder pipe nozzle where Phillips could best direct a master stream to attempt to check the northerly spread of the fire.

Other firefighters, meanwhile, advanced hoselines into the lumber yard and attempted to cut off the spread of flames which now involved lumber stacked outside the shed as well as Mullin's adjoining retail hardware shop. Division 3 Commander Dudley A. Sorenson ordered the two ladder pipes to shut down so the powerful streams would not endanger firefighters inside the yard.

The intense flames, gorging upon an enormous fireload of lumber and other flammables, drove the firefighters back. Sorenson ordered Trucks 89 and 102 to resume their ladder pipe stream operation. At 8:27 p.m., about a minute after Sorenson gave the order, a loud clashing of metal against metal was heard above the roaring flames as Truck 102's ladder pipe assembly came loose, struck Phillips, and knocked him off the ladder. He fell about 50 feet to the street. Rescue Ambulance 89 rushed Phillips to Serra Memorial Hospital where the 30-year-old firefighter was pronounced dead of head injuries.

Immediately after Phillips' fall, an eerie silence fell over firefighters and the hundreds of spectators. The fire was finally brought under control 65 minutes after the first alarm. Arson investigators found the roof vent assembly and detected superficial scrapings, probably from a crowbar, on the dial of the office safe which had not been opened.

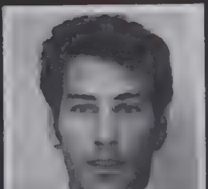


Moments after this photo was taken, Firefighter Brian E. Phillips, 30, of Task Force 102 (right) was killed when the aerial ladder pipe assembly came loose struck Phillips and knocked him off the ladder during the Mullin Lumber Company arson fire.

Inspector Jim Daneker arrived with the Mobile Lab. Using a sniffer — a device which can detect the presence of hydrocarbons, such as those found in gasoline — Daneker found at least two points of probable ignition. The sniffer detected hydrocarbon vapors on the floor of the office and in the lumber shed. Arson investigators located witnesses who said they saw two men, both carrying gasoline cans, dash across Sherman Way, enter a car and speed west immediately before the outbreak of flames.

As the investigation continued, Phillips' funeral was attended by an extraordinarily large number of firefighters from departments throughout Southern California. His survivors

REQUIESCAT IN PACE



Firefighter Brian E. Phillips
Truck 102
Died of injuries suffered in fall from
aerial ladder
April 25, 1979

cluded his wife, Brenda, and stepdaughter, Michelle Lee upp; his mother, Loraine, and father, Terry Phillips, a LAFD ptain who had retired from Engine 39 shortly before his son ined the department.

During a May 3, 1979, news conference amid the lumberyard ins, Capt. Lyle E. Hall, president of the United Firefighters of os Angeles City, Local 112, announced a $10,000 reward for formation leading to the arrest and conviction of the arson-ts. Investigators came frustratingly close to obtaining suffi-ent evidence which would have resulted in those arrests and e probable conviction of the arsonists. The case remains pen.

The second incendiary blaze which killed a firefighter oc-rred only a few miles west of the Mullin Lumber Company. single-story brick building housed the Acme Supply & Rib-on Company and Remington Industries at 7350 Fulton Ave-ue, North Hollywood. The jointly-owned and operated retail nd wholesale firms dealt in office supplies and equipment. he 100-by-200-foot structure contained a large storage area r photocopying paper and toner, a petroleum distillate simi-r to kerosine, used in liquid-operated copying machines.

At 9:04 p.m., that Fire Service Day, Saturday May 12, 1979, CD dispatched an assignment, including Squad 39, in re-ponse to a water flow alarm from Remington Industries. orcing entry, firefighters found the building well-charged ith smoke. The sprinkler system had all-but doused the ames. Firefighters also discovered three points of origin. Bat-lion 14 Chief Ted O'Miela immediately called for arson in-estigators. The sprinkler system was shut off and as little vidence as possible was disturbed as firefighters began what ey expected to be a prolonged cleanup job to rid the building f water.

Arson Investigators Donald E. Brian and Glen Lucero quick- arrived and were investigating and photographing the areas f origin, as firefighters were dragging their hoselines from the uilding. Suddenly, the large storage area of toner in plastic ugs erupted into a fireball which quickly spread flames hroughout the building. Firefighters immediately turned the prinkler system back on and moved in with hoselines to tack the flames.

The fire was deep-seated inside the cartons of toner. Addi-onal companies were called and Deputy Chief Albert L. chultz also answered the greater alarm. The flammable liquid oating atop the water in the smoke and fire-filled building ave off toxic vapors as did the burning plastic containers. irefighters who had virtually exhausted their breathing appa-atus supply during initial knockdown operations quickly ran ut of air and had to leave the building for fresh bottles. everal dozen firefighters were felled by toxic vapors or chemi-al burns and were taken to hospitals by rescue ambulances.

Squad 39 firefighters reported to Schultz that one of their nembers, Lynn R. Hazlett, was missing. Schultz immediately rdered a search. Hazlett's body was found near where one of the three fires had been set. He apparently became disoriented in the smoke while trying to escape the building. His air supply ran low and he collapsed and suffocated. Hazlett, 42, was a 17-year-member of the department. He was survived by his wife, Susan and four stepchildren. Mrs. Hazlett gave birth to his son, John Robert, a week after the fire. On May 15, Local 112 announced another $10,000 reward for information on the Remington fire.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF DON BRIAN

Arson Investigators Don Brian and Glen Lucero were examining debris following a May 12, 1979, incendiary fire in a North Hollywood commercial building when the fire suddenly reflashed. Lucero snapped this photo immediately after the flashing fireball erupted from stored cartons of highly-flammable duplicating fluid. Firefighter Lynn R. Hazlett of Squad 39 suffocated as fire spread through the building.

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Firefighter Lynn R. Hazlett
Squad 39
Died of suffocation in commercial building fire
May 12, 1979

This fire resulted in the first joint investigative effort by the LAFD's arson section, the Arson Task Force of the U.S. Treasury Department's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms, and the LAPD. Harold F. Gere, 56, of Tarzana, owner of Remington Industries, told investigators he was attending a baseball game at Dodger Stadium at the time of the fire and first learned of it after he was paged over the public address system. General Manager Martin W. Whiter, 47, of Woodland Hills, Gere's business partner, said he was playing poker with friends when the fire occurred.

As investigators delved into the activities of the firm, they learned it was in serious financial difficulty. Among the problems was the cost of defending law suits filed by nationally-known companies which charged Remington with falsely-labeling office supplies with their brand names. Shortly before the fire, Remington management had substantially increased their fire insurance coverage to $2.4 million with Aetna Life & Casualty Company.

Inventory records, moreover, showed that $240,000 in office supplies had been moved to another location prior to the fire. Confirming that the building had to be forcibly entered by first-arriving firefighters, investigators concluded that someone with access to keys had entered the building, set the fire and locked up before leaving. The alibis of Gere and Whiter checked out. The only possible conclusion was that somebody had been hired to set the fire and had been provided with keys.

After an intensive investigation, Gere and Whiter were arrested and charged with arson-homicide, two counts of fraud and aiding and abetting each other in hiring someone to set the fire. During the federal court trial, a judicial ruling of insufficient evidence resulted in a directed verdict of acquittal of Whiter. Gere was convicted. U.S. District Court Judge William P. Gray sentenced him on November 10, 1980, to 10 years in federal prison. Investigators believe a professional arsonist was hired to do the job, but he was never caught.

While the investigative work into the Remington fire was underway, a high-rise blaze in the central city area became the most controversial fire in the modern history of the fire department. Early in the morning of October 29, 1979, Sidney Karton, 44, was awakened by a fire in his plushly-furnished apartment on the 11th floor of the 19-story West Tower of the Bunker Hill Towers complex at 222 South Figueroa Street. Karton fled from his apartment toward the corridor elevators. With his apartment door open, in-rushing air from the corridor brought the fire to full blossom. The heat shattered windows facing Figueroa Street.

Receiving many calls, OCD, at 3:05 a.m., sent a larger than normal assignment, including Task Forces 3 and 9, Engine 6, Squad 4, Battalion 1 Chief Mike Mitchell and Assistant Chief Dudley E. Sorenson of Division 1. Task Force 3, on-scene four minutes later, reported an apartment fully-involved about midway up the Figueroa or west side of the high-rise.

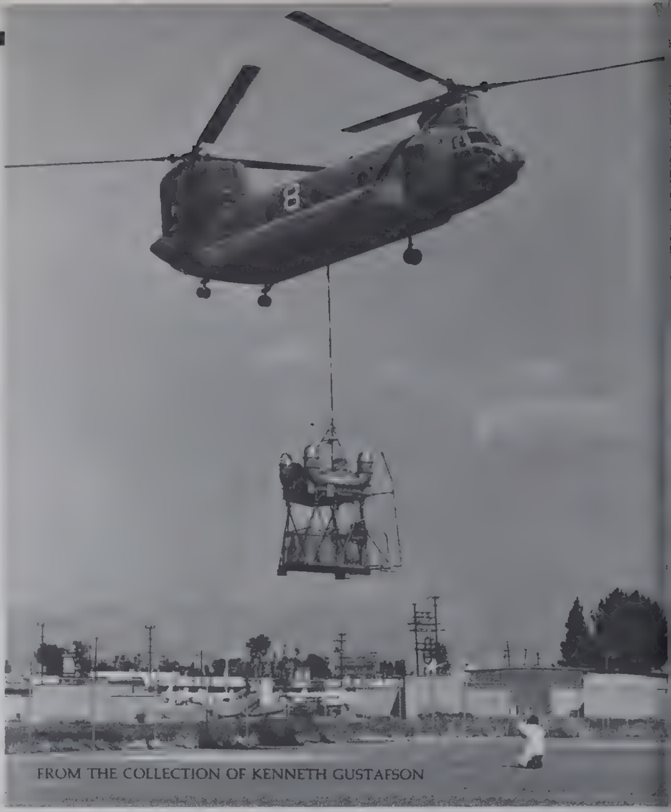
Mitchell, arriving a minute later, called for two more task forces, as firefighters immediately went into the incident command system's high-rise mode. Mitchell quickly established lobby control, planned 10th floor staging and sent the first five of an eventual total of 10 fire attack teams up the stairways. The structure's building inventory did not show an air conditioning or ventilating system. The first hint that such a system existed and was operating came when smoke was encountered in the lobby and especially in the north stairwell by firefighters climbing stairs with their heavy equipment.

Because high-rise fires are so exhausting and demand so much manpower and resources, a total of 17 task forces, nine triple combination engines, two squads, six rescue-ambulances, eight battalion chiefs and other officers were soon called. Seven minutes into the fire, OCD dispatchers were taking calls from residents of Bunker Hill Towers and those in nearby high-rises. One of those calls indicated that two people were trapped on a ninth floor ledge on the rear side of the building.

OCD relayed that information, together with other reports of many people in windows from the ninth to the 19th floors. Still more calls from Bunker Hill Tower residents said smoke was invading their floors and apartments as the high-rise's air duct system spread smoke. Dispatchers told Bunker Hill residents the fire was on the 11th floor and that they should remain inside their apartments with the doors closed. They were assured they were in no danger because firefighters shortly would come to their rescue.

Confusing, conflicting and garbled radio transmissions and other messages led Incident Commander Sorenson and his support chiefs to believe that none of those reported to be in danger actually were. They believed the fire was confined to the 11th floor apartment. Unknown to them, the open apartment door was exacerbating problems. A strong wind, estimated at up to 40-miles-per-hour, was whipping the fire inside Karton's apartment to a greater frenzy. Like a blowtorch, the wind drove flames against the door of Apartment 1113, directly across from Karton's.

Inside that apartment were Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Maxwell and their black poodle. The Maxwells were the couple who had been reported on what appeared to be a ninth floor ledge, but which actually was an 11th floor ledge due to the design of the building as seen from the outside.


FROM THE COLLECTION OF KENNETH GUSTAFSON

Following the 1979 Bunker Hill Towers fire, the LAFD began testing The Flying Fire Engine (Suspended Maneuvering System) built by the McDonnell Douglas Corporation. The device was lifted by a cable and transported by LAFD helicopter pilots flying a CH47A Chinook. Top-mounted thrusters enabled the platform to be moved in a 150-foot radius alongside high-rise buildings at heights aerial ladders could not reach. The Flying Fire Engine could carry up to eight firefighters or paramedics and rescue as many as 16 persons at a time. The first response of the system was to a major fire at 11:34 a.m., August 6, 1981, at 212 South Hill Street. The platform was not needed. The Flying Fire Engine idea was later dropped and, at the time of the LAFD centennial, the apparatus was stored at Fire Station 109.

With attack teams encountering severe smoke and heat conditions, the north stairwell became untenable and the fire floor could only be reached by the south stairwell. The elevators, as past fires had proven, were unsafe to use. Under the best of conditions, it would take firefighters many minutes to reach the 10th floor beneath the fire floor, set up staging and work their way up to attack the 11th floor fire. Heat and smoke forced staging to be moved down to the ninth floor.

Further compounding problems were the exhausting exertions of stair-climbing firefighters with their hosepacks, air bottles and other equipment. Thirty-minute air bottle supplies were, under the heavy breathing demands, good for only about 10 to 20 minutes, before firefighters paused to get new bottles. That would further delay direct attack on a fire which was unusually severe due to the heavy fireloading among furnishings in Karton's apartment. Flames spread along the corridor outside the involved apartment. The building's air system, meanwhile, continued to spread smoke throughout the high-rise.

Chief officers at the Figueroa Street command post were repeatedly told by OCD and by Bunker Hill residents that people were trapped in upper floors at the rear of the building. The described locations continued to lead them to believe that these people were in no imminent peril. A fire captain and police officers nevertheless went to the rear and, using bullhorns, tried to calm dozens of residents in windows. But the low power of the bullhorns, coupled with the strong wind, made it impossible for people in upper floor windows to understand what they were being told. More calls went into OCD

refighter Lynn R. Hazlett of Squad 39 suffocated and several dozen refighters were felled by toxic vapors or chemical burns during an son fire in a commercial building at 7350 Fulton Avenue, North ollywood.

om Bunker Hill residents who said the bullhorn messages ere unintelligible. Dispatchers repeated their instructions to ay inside their apartments and to make sure their doors were osed.

At 3:12 a.m., only seven minutes after the first alarm, Engine firefighters gained entry to the 11th floor. They were shortly ereafter joined by Task Force 10 and Task Force 15 fire-ghters. Fire attack was severely hampered due to the intense eat and smoke and the constant need to replace air bottles. Iore than half an hour into the fire and after the Maxwell ouple had been on the ledge for almost all that time, the blow-rch effect of the wind-driven fire jetting from Karton's apart-ent against the Maxwells' door caused the door to fall flat as a drawbridge had slammed down.

The fierce injection of fire shot directly across the Maxwells' partment and to the ledge. Maxwell, holding his black poodle, gether with his wife, Joyce, plunged nine floors onto a patio oof and were killed. Mrs. Maxwell's wrist watch stopped at 37 a.m. The back of Thomas Maxwell's bathrobe was narred, which suggested that the fire literally pushed them off ne ledge. A few minutes later, Task Force 10 firefighters found arton's body near the 11th floor elevator.

Hardly had the fire been knocked down at 3:58 a.m., when rious charges were starting to be leveled at the LAFD, which uickly found itself embroiled in a debate including Bunker ill Tower residents, the City Council, the media and the fire ommission which appointed a subcommittee to make an in-estigation of the fire independent of the department's. The ity Council soon appointed still another investigatory group.

Chief Engineer Gerard vigorously objected. Investigations nto a vastly-complicated fire, he said, should not be made by lay persons unfamiliar with high-rise firefighting techniques and the myriad problems which invariably arise during them and that require snap judgments. The debate during the next weeks was frought with emotionalism, guesswork, suppositions and resulted in severe criticism of the fire department for not at least attempting to rescue the Maxwells.

The major question at issue was this: Why were there no direct attempts to rescue the Maxwells who were known to be on the ledge for around 30 minutes after arrival of firefighters? First of all, structural peculiarities of the building and countless reports of where they were must be considered. By an architectural fluke, the fire as seen from the front of the building was unquestionably on the 11th floor and seemed to be confined to one apartment. The Maxwells, as seen from the rear of the building, looked to be on the ninth floor — two floors below the fire floor — which is where most reports put them. Therefore, they did not seem to be in any more danger than dozens of other people standing in windows and on ledges on the back side of the building.

High-rise firefighting experience in Los Angeles, as elsewhere, has demonstrated that immediate interior attack is the fastest and most effective method for saving lives and containing the fire. Despite that maxim, critics nevertheless asked why an aerial ladder was not brought to the rear and the Maxwells saved.

Long before the fire, the LAFD had been warned by building personnel that the two-story patio roof at the rear would not support the weight of an aerial ladder. Even if it did, access to the rear was difficult, if not impossible. Trees would first have had to be cut down and autos moved. Compared to that time-consuming effort, there was every expectancy that tried-and-true interior high-rise fire attack would more quickly result in saving lives.

Other critics asked why nets were not used or why firefighters did not attempt to rescue the Maxwells by lowering themselves by ropes from the roof. Nets are ineffective above about four stories. Lowering of firefighters would have been

Water-dropping bombers, loaned by Canadair to the LAFD for trial, got their first use the day they arrived, September 16, 1979. A brush fire, starting near 8612 Hillside Avenue in Laurel Canyon, destroyed or damaged 29 homes. The department later decided that its fleet of helicopters was more cost-effective and versatile. The use of Super Scoopers, which took water on board while skimming the surface of the Pacific Ocean, was later discontinued.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF PAUL DITZEL

Firefighters were not aware that an attic fire in the Naval and Marine Corps Reserve Center had been burning for several hours when they answered a 11:19 a.m., September 27, 1980, alarm. Although the roof seemed strong to stand upon while smoke ventilation procedures proceeded, it was, in fac dangerously weak. Ventilation seemed to be proceeding satisfactorily whe Firefighter Frank Hotchkin of Truck 1, fell through the roof and was kille

time-consuming and too dangerous to the Maxwells and the firefighters.

The tragic irony was the fact that the Maxwells could have saved themselves. Again, Murphy's Law was very much in evidence that night. The Maxwells were staying alone as guests in their son's apartment. They could not, therefore, have been expected to know what to do during a high-rise fire, nor the procedures to follow as the LAFD had earlier trained permanent residents of the Bunker Hill complex. If only the Maxwells had gone to an adjoining bedroom, which was mostly unscathed by the fire, they would have survived. Frustrating to the firefighters, who took such a heavy exposure to smoke and heat as they fought their way onto the 11th floor, was this observation: If only the Maxwells' apartment door had withstood the flame impingement a few more minutes, they undoubtedly would have been rescued.

Lost amid the criticisms leveled at the department was the positive side of the ledger. The high-rise incident command system, with notably few exceptions, worked unusually well. Firefighters, despite tremendous heat and smoke and while lugging heavy equipment up many flights of stairs, had wat on the fire as early as six minutes after the first alarm. Remark able, too, was the fact that the firefighters prevented the flame from extending much beyond the apartment where they orig nated. Despite a host of problems, firefighters achieved contr of this unusually severe fire 54 minutes after the initial alarm

Significant, too, is the fact that the LAFD's investigatio contained far more definitive recommendations for improv ments than either of the two lay investigations. These recom mendations, quickly implemented, included greater emphas upon rescue and evacuation procedures in the incident com mand system. It must be noted, however, that evacuation hundreds of people in the 19-story high-rise would have s verely compounded problems by resulting in congested stai wells and a heavy commitment of firefighting personnel wh were sorely needed in carrying the attack directly to the fi floor. With one stairwell untenable due to smoke and hea evacuation of the building was not a viable option.

Another implemented recommendation was a new proc dure requiring constant reconnaissance of all sides of a hig

spector James L. Daneker, head of the Mobile Lab, wearing an entry suit, lizes a Kitagawa toxic vapor detector to determine the possible presence of isonous chemicals in the ruins of a suspected arson fire.

LAFD PHOTO

se fire, including the dispatch of at least one helicopter imme- ately upon discovery of a potentially severe fire in a high-rise nd the activation of the incident command system.

Without question, the greatest overall lesson learned and uickly-implemented was the need for smoke detectors. The re resulted in a citywide requirement, effective August 8, 980, for smoke detectors in the corridors and bedrooms of all ultiple dwelling occupancies. The law also required smoke etectors in all new residential constructions as well as detector stallations in homes undergoing remodeling or at the time of le. The department had long campaigned for smoke detector rotection throughout the city. If it can be said that any major enefit resulted from the Bunker Hill tragedy, it is the fact that os Angeles enacted a smoke detector law which would stand a national model.

A fire-weakened roof resulted in the death of a firefighter ho was killed at a major emergency blaze that occurred in the ll of 1980. At 11:19 a.m., Saturday, September 27, 1980, OCD spatched Task Forces 4 and 3, Engine 6 and Battalion 11 Chief Guy Smith to the Naval and Marine Corps Reserve Center, 1700 Stadium Way, near Dodger Stadium. First-arriving Engine 6 reported that smoke was rolling from the roof and called for help. Task Forces 1 and 11 were sent.

Firefighters found heavy smoke and fire conditions in the second floor and attic area of the two-story, 250-by-200-foot building. While interior attack began, a total of 40 companies were quickly called to the fire; many of them for the purpose of providing water in an area where long hoselays for relaying water from distant supplies were necessary. Truck companies, including Task Force 1, meanwhile laddered the roof and began using rotary and chain saws and other tools to cut smoke ventilation holes.

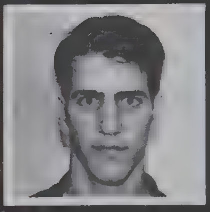
They felt sufficiently safe on the roof, despite the raging fire underneath them. The roof mainly consisted of thick wood sheathing. They knew that thickness should give them plenty of time to make their ventilation cuts. What they did not know was that the fire had been burning for more than two hours. At 9:05 a.m., a guard noticed what he thought was steam emitting from a roof ventilator. He paid little heed, because he assumed workers were testing the building's boilers. What looked to be steam continued to spiral from the ventilator for two hours before workers realized they were seeing smoke and called the fire department.

Despite the fact the attic had been burning for more than two hours, the firefighters noted that the underfoot texture of the roof was not suspiciously spongy and therefore proceeded with their extremely difficult job of opening it up. While smoke and flames stabbed from the classrooms and attic, Truck 1 Firefighter Frank Hotchkin, 24, fell through the fire-weakened roof and was killed.

Hotchkin, a member of the department for just over three years, had been assigned to Truck 1 for only a month after seeing service at Fire Stations 12, 88, 39 and 83. He was survived by his wife, June Marie. The cause of the $500,000 fire was found to be an electrical problem in the attic.

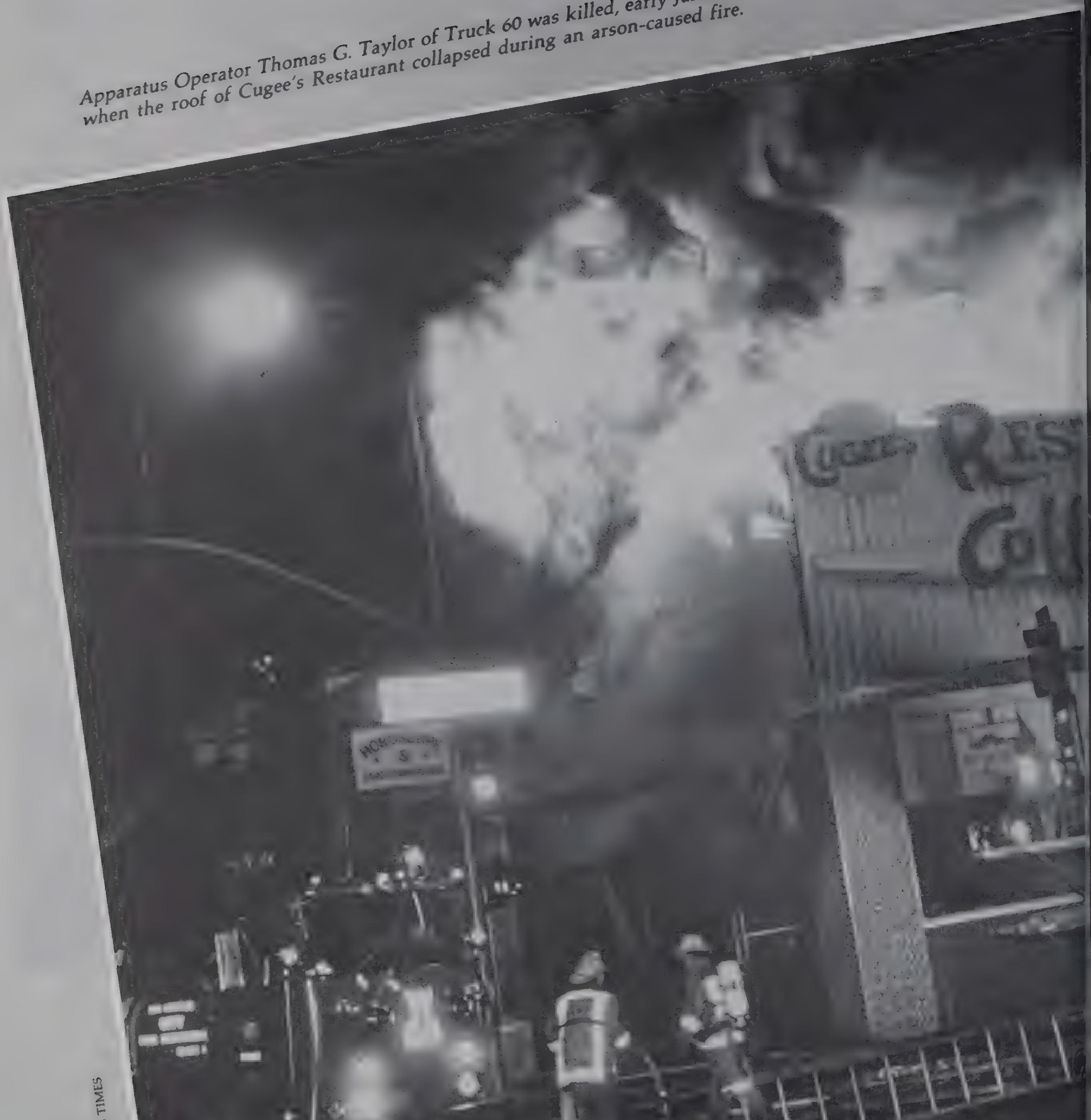
Hotchkin was the 46th firefighter known to have died in the line of duty. Three more members of the department — two firefighters and a paramedic — were to lose their lives before the LAFD marked the completion of its first century of service.

REQUIESCAT IN PACE



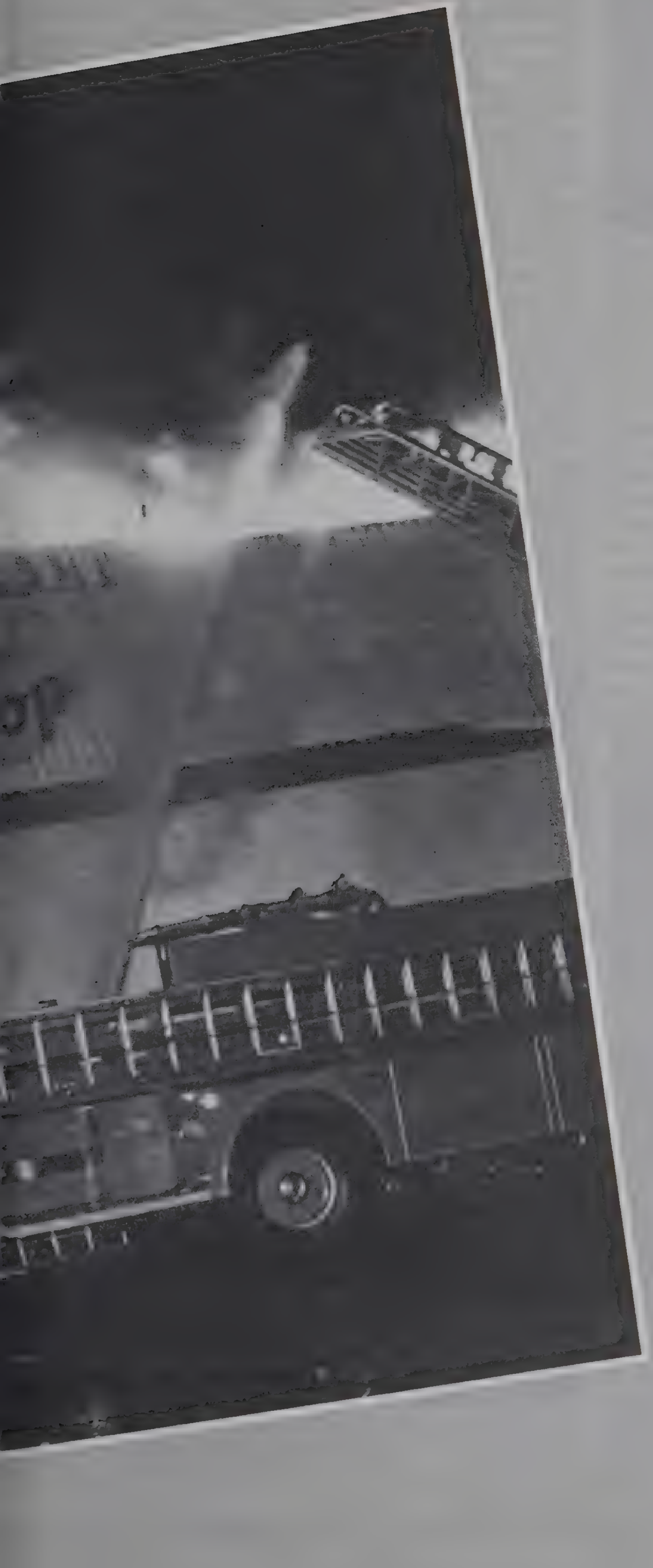
Firefighter Frank Hotchkin
Truck 1
Died from injuries suffered in fall through roof
September 27, 1980

Apparatus Operator Thomas G. Taylor of Truck 60 was killed, early January 28, 1981, when the roof of Cugee's Restaurant collapsed during an arson-caused fire.



MIKE MEADOWS/LOS ANGELES TIMES

CHAPTER X



YARDSTICKS FOR EXCELLENCE

Shortly after 3:30 on that drizzling January 28, 1981, morning, firefighters at Fire Station 60 were awakened by the incessant ringing of their front doorbell and pounding on the station's windows. A passerby told them a restaurant was burning at Lankershim Boulevard and Weddington Street, a few blocks behind the station. Even as Station 60 firefighters were turning out to the still alarm, OCD at 3:33 a.m. was transmitting the initial dispatch of Task Forces 60 and 102, Engine 86, Squad 39 and Battalion 14 Chief Don Case.

Firefighters encountered heavy smoke conditions, but saw little flame as they pulled up to the single-story Cugee's Coffee Shop and Restaurant, 5300 Lankershim Boulevard, at the northeast corner of Weddington Street. Task Force 60 Commander Michael Reagan ordered the truck to spot on Weddington and to raise its aerial preparatory to starting ventilation. Engine 60 and other incoming companies began laying lines into the fire.

Access to the roof was complicated by the facade which extended well above it. Firefighters took a roof ladder to the top of the parapet and used it to lower themselves onto the roof. The ventilation team consisted of Firefighters Burton H. Sander, Coleman R. Lawson and Apparatus Operator Thomas G. Taylor. Sander and Lawson thumped along the roof with their D-handled rubbish hooks to check for its stability. The roof seemed solid. With each step they tested for roof sponginess. There appeared to be no problem as Taylor began opening up the roof with a chain saw. The only fire they could see was flame blowing from a grease duct toward the rear of the restaurant. Reagan had, by now, joined his men on the roof. Taylor was starting his second cut when at 3:46 a.m. — 13 minutes after the first alarm — the roof suddenly separated from the north wall and collapsed. Reagan and Sander made it through thick smoke to the roof ladder, climbed over the parapet and hung there as firefighters rushed to raise a ladder to them.

Battalion 14 Aide Ronald S. Leydecker and Firefighter Thomas A. Shrout of Engine 60 quickly climbed the aerial ladder. Leydecker helped Lawson onto the aerial, while Shrout reached for Taylor who had slid down the slope of the collapsed roof. Straddling the rail of the aerial ladder with his foot, Shrout reached down to grab Taylor's outstretched hand. Their hands touched several times, but neither firefighter could get a sufficiently secure grip for Shrout to pull Taylor out. Seconds later, Taylor fell into the fire and was killed.

Reagan, his hands burned and his turnouts smoldering as flames boiled from the building, was forced to release his grip and fell to the sidewalk. Sander similarly fell and became entangled in the ladder being raised to save him. As the injured Reagan and Sander were being attended, the south side of the restaurant facade and wall fell outward and sent a cascade of bricks and other debris onto the firefighters.

Reagan suffered burns to both hands and other injuries; Sander a fractured left arm; Firefighter Coleman R. Lawson of Engine 60, smoke inhalation and Firefighter Garry L. Ingham of Squad 39, a fractured kneecap.

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Apparatus Operator Thomas G. Taylor
Truck 60
Died of burns in roof collapse
January 28, 1981

Immediately after the 4:28 a.m., knockdown of the fire, Task Force 39 was assigned to look for Taylor. Task Force Commander William A. Burnidge found the body at 5:57 a.m. Taylor, 34, was survived by his wife, Jonet, his father, retired LAFD Capt. George Taylor and a brother, Firefighter Jeffrey Taylor, on duty at Truck 27 at the time of the fire.

Capt. Pat McGuinness, arson section commander and his investigators at first had little reason to doubt preliminary indications the fire was caused by an electrical short circuit in the attic. They nevertheless recognized that perhaps nine out of 10 major fires in restaurants are arson-related. Investigators routinely questioned Cugee's co-owners, Henry Martinez, 54, and his common-law wife, Arline Boyle, 43. They had alibis and no prior arrest records. Dozens of interviews elicited the consensus that Cugee's was enjoying good business.

The consensus was interesting, but facts were what was wanted. Extensive media coverage led to many telephoned tips. McGuinness took one of the first calls. A Cugee's supplier said the owners were delinquent in paying their bills. A waitress tipped that her paycheck had bounced. Other sources ferrete by investigators unequivocally showed that Cugee's was i deep financial trouble. Martinez and Boyle had quietly tried t sell the business while greatly increasing their fire insuran coverage to $175,000.

Recalling the superb assistance provided during the Rem ington insurance fraud fire by the Arson Task Force of th Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms, McGuinness aske for their help. Within hours, ATF response team member each of them specialists in the complex science of fire cau investigation, were flying from as far away as Alaska to L Angeles, where they joined local ATF members.

The first task was to examine the debris, shovelful-by-sho elful, brick-by-brick. Over 100 LAFD and ATF arson invest gators, firefighters and police swarmed around and inside th ruins. Police cordoned the area while photos were taken from LAFD helicopter orbiting Cugee's. The pictures would lat enable jurors to better visualize the crime scene. Teams firefighters with shovels and wheelbarrows worked in tande with arson investigators picking through the debris. Eve square foot of Cugee's rubble was sifted through wire mes screens. Locations of debris were meticulously marked on gridwork diagram scaled to the size of Cugee's.

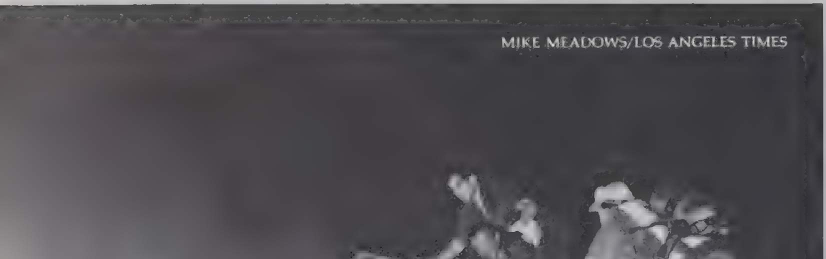
Investigator Gary Cooper, who had been detailed to wo with the ATF, significantly chiseled chips from the concre slab foundation. LAFD Mobile Lab sniffers showed the pres ence of hydrocarbons in not one spot, but many. The sniffe also found that gasoline had been splashed in the attic whe they detected vapors in the charred timbers that had support the roof. Cooper's work throughout the investigation earne him a commendation from U.S. Attorney Stephen S. Trott,

Despite the discovery of multiple fire sets and the appare attempt to defraud the fire insurance company by torching th restaurant, investigators were weeks away from making a rests. They had to find the arsonist and determine whether th fire-setter had an accomplice. The co-owners were put und almost constant surveillance and much was learned of the associates. Intensive undercover work brought out that Ma tinez had hired a torch, known only as Willie, weeks before th fire. Willie took the $1500 payoff to do the job, skipped tow and was never seen again.,

The key to breaking a tough case often depends upon loca ing and concentrating upon the weakest link. And that's whe Ruth Harris, 44, a friend of Boyle's, entered the case. Investig tors learned Boyle had asked Harris' help in locating somebod who would torch the restaurant. Harris asked her hairdresse Mario Catanio, 41. He agreed to do the job for $2500.

Harris was unwilling to talk to investigators until they co fronted her with the steadily growing weight of evidence pro ing her complicity. The probability of a prison term led her agree to being wired with a concealed tape recorder. As the ta silently spun, Catanio and the others provided a first-han account of the conspiracy while Harris discussed her pris worries with them.

Martinez and Boyle were arrested, pled guilty to arso homicide and, on September 10, 1981, were each sentenced 10 years in federal prison. In exchange for her cooperatio Harris was put on five years probation. Catanio was foun guilty of fraud charges and got 13 years. Hoping for a ligh sentence, Martinez turned against Catanio and told investig tors they had met in a Howard Johnson's Hotel near Cugee' There, Martinez gave the restaurant keys to Catanio and pa him the $2500. Martinez testified Catanio told him, "Aft tonight, you won't be in the restaurant business any longer Catanio subsequently was found guilty of arson-homicide a was sentenced, January 26, 1982, to an additional 13 years prison. Did he have an accomplice when he set the fires? On Catanio knows the answer.



MIKE MEADOWS/LOS ANGELES TIMES

Cugee's Restaurant in North Hollywood was heavily-charged with smoke when the roof suddenly collapsed. Task Force 60 Commander Michael D. Reagan (left) and Firefighter Burton H. Sander of Truck 60 (right) managed to climb over a parapet and hung there while awaiting rescue. Battalion 14 Aide Ronald S. Leydecker and Firefighter Thomas A. Shrout of Engine 60 quickly climbed Truck 60's aerial to save other firefighters. Firefighter Coleman R. Lawson was helped onto the ladder, while Shrout reached down to grab Apparatus Operator Thomas G. Taylor's outstretched hand. Their hands touched several times, but Taylor fell into the fire and was killed.

Chief Engineer Gerard retired, June 6, 1982, to become ex- cutive director of the National Fire Protection Association's ewly-created National Fire Research Foundation in Washing- n, D.C. Gerard's title subsequently was changed to Washing- n representative of the NFPA. Until a new chief engineer was lected through civil service procedures, Deputy Chief Allen . Evansen, then serving as operations deputy, was named ting chief, effective June 6, 1982.

Laws requiring better built-in fire protection following the onet Square, Stratford and Bunker Hill West Tower fires were ot all the LAFD wanted to insure the safety of tenants of the ty's apartment houses and hotels. Automatic sprinklers ould complete the loop and make the city's multiple resident ccupancies probably the most firesafe in the United States. uilding owners were complying with the many recently-en- ted laws. Representative of them was Hiram W. Kwan, an wner of the Dorothy Mae Apartment Hotel, who was well head of schedule in investing in fire safeguards in the build- g.

The Dorothy Mae at 821 West Sunset Boulevard, east of gueroa Street, was 55-years old. Its apartments were largely- nanted by former residents of El Salitre, a small rural com- unity in Mexico. The four-story brick building was equipped ith twin sets of so-called Ponet doors near the ends of each oor. Just beyond the outer sets of Ponets were fire escape oors.

The Dorothy Mae also had a legally-required smoke detector each apartment unit. Building owners were well-ahead of hedule with electronically-retrofitting the battery-operated stem. Many apartments had battery as well as electrically- erated detectors. Fire prevention bureau records showed the building had an excellent history of compliance with other regulations. Especially because the Dorothy Mae was among the least likely deathtraps in Los Angeles, the city was all the more stunned by what happened early that Saturday morning, September 4, 1982.

LANCE MAILLIS

refighters made dozens of rescues when smoke and heat swept rough the Dorothy Mae Apartment Hotel early September 4, 1982. he arson fire resulted in the deaths of 25 persons.

At 4:26 a.m., a liquor store pay phone a block from the Dorothy Mae, was used to report a fire in the apartment building. Strangely, no calls came from the Dorothy Mae, despite the fact that nearly every one of the 43 apartment units had a telephone. OCD at 4:27 a.m., dispatched Task Forces 3 and 4, Engine 6, Squad 4 and Battalion 1 Chief Glenn Dinger. It was a short run for all companies and Engine 6 arrived first. Nobody was fleeing from the building. Nobody was at the windows. The Dorothy Mae was deathly quiet.

Capt. Leroy Davidson noticed a small amount of smoke — from a rubbish bin, he guessed — in the rear alley behind the Dorothy Mae. Davidson radioed that sizeup and, with Firefighter Zane Testerman, stretched a one-and-one-half-inch hoseline through a vacant lot alongside the 130-foot-long building.

Davidson and Testerman found no trash fire, but they did see wisps of smoke and an apparently insignificant fire along the door frame of an open fire escape door on the fourth floor. As other companies arrived, their sirens and air horns led firefighters to expect to see people come to the windows to learn what the fuss was all about. Few did.

Because the Dorothy Mae stood on a slight hill, the second floor was at ground level in the rear alley. Davidson and Testerman advanced their hoseline through the fire escape door and proceeded to the first Ponet door. Opening that door, they were confronted by a sight that was to be forever etched in their memories:

In the stairwell were eight badly-burned bodies sprawled or piled on top of each other. Another body was nearby on the stairway to the third floor. "It looked like an explosion had thrown them there," said Davidson, who handie-talkied their discovery to first-arriving Task Force 4 Commander Dean Cathey. Captain Cathey immediately called for two more task forces while Dinger, a minute later, ordered two paramedic rescue-ambulances.

Using their small handline, Davidson and Testerman doused the burning clothing on the victims, found two mortally-burned victims among the seven dead and dragged them out. Only after clearing away bodies could they advance their line past the next Ponet door to hit the hallway fire they found. They quickly knocked it down with only about 100 gallons of water. Capt. Roger Gillis and his Squad 4 firefighters, advancing from the second-floor front hallway, met Engine 6's Davidson and Testerman coming towards them and together completed extinguishment along the first floor corridor.

It is impossible to construct an exact chronological scenario during the next few minutes, but this is known: The Dorothy Mae's windows suddenly filled with tenants. Why had they waited so long to make themselves known? Maybe they had tried to flee down the narrow corridors and through the Ponet doors, only to find their escape blocked by fire. Maybe the sirens and airhorns of arriving apparatus awakened them. Firefighters quickly laddered all sides of the building as calls went in for more apparatus and eight rescue-ambulances under the command of Assistant Chief Dudley E. Sorenson.

Many ladder rescues were made, including at least 10 by Truck 4 firefighters. Commander Al Ramirez of Task Force 3 and his truckmen picked off more than two dozen people. Task Force 26 Commander Tom Stires sent Firefighter Jesus Pasos up the raised aerial. Pasos' Spanish-speaking ability calmed many tenants, including the woman and her infant he rescued from a third floor window.

KEITH D. CULLOM SANTA BARBARA COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

The Gorter water tower, restored by a group of LAFD volunteers, debuted May 23, 1981, during a statewide Fireman's Muster outside Dodger Stadium in celebration of the 200th Birthday of the City of Los Angeles. The Gorter won the Parade Judge's Trophy, the top prize for antique apparatus in the muster. Built in 1905 as a horsedrawn apparatus, the Gorter was motorized in 1919 with a two-wheel front-drive American LaFrance tractor.

As search and rescue proceeded, Engine 4 Capt. Jim Langsfeld and his firefighters made another stark discovery: 11 more bodies sprawled in the third floor rear stairwell and hallway. The Dorothy Mae fire would result in 25 deaths. Strangely, nearly every victim was totally covered with burns. Most burn fatalities evidence only partial coverage, except in full-blown fires; which this one was not.

Equally mystifying was the position of the bodies. Most fire victims tend to be found face-down, on their sides, or curled up. One body was found face-up with the arms fully-outstretched above her head. Her infant, lying beside her, also was face-up. While some of the bodies undoubtedly were moved during firefighting, a better explanation for this puzzler would come later.

Firefighters were confronted with other mysteries. Davidson's initial discovery of smoke and fire on the fourth floor rear fire escape, plus the finding of victims in the two rear, badly-burned stairshafts, suggested the fire was in the back end of the building. From near the front of the Dorothy Mae, however, thick smoke — the worst seen during the fire — suddenly began to gush from a second floor apartment's windows and from third floor windows directly above. Flames also suddenly came up from the hallway floor when a Squad 4 firefighter stepped through fire-weakened supports just ahead of the front Ponet door.

With the fire seemingly extending both horizontally and vertically, task forces were assigned to cut a large opening in the roof for smoke and heat ventilation. The fire was quickly controlled in 28 minutes with one-and-one-half-inch lines. Only the second and third floor hallways, the two apartments and the rear stairshaft were severely damaged by the fire.

A medical division under Battalion 7 Chief Ken Brass was activated soon after discovery of victims, who were taken to initial treatment and medical stabilization areas preparatory to hospitalization. Twenty-eight victims were taken to hospitals where six of them died from burns.

Investigation into the Dorothy Mae disaster, which killed a many people as the Stratford fire, began immediately. Th investigating team included the best expertise the LAFD an other agencies could muster in specialties including fire caus determination, arson, photography and videotaping, cartography, fire prevention and suppression, public informatio chemistry, char-depth measurement and flamespread. Like jigsaw puzzle, investigators slowly fitted together the piece during weeks of intensive work. At last they came up wit answers which largely explained how and why so many live were lost in one of the three worst apartment hotel fires in th LAFD's history.

Seeds for the disaster were planted about 11 p.m., six hour before the first alarm. A fourth floor rear tenant said she ha heard sounds of the outer Ponet and fire escape doors bein blocked open to provide ventilation that unusually hot nigh She was certain the inner Ponet door remained closed. Th undoubtedly saved everyone living on the fourth floor. Wit the open outer Ponet and fire escape doors on the top floor, a freely swirled up the rear stairshaft from the ground floor t the third floor.

Sometime around 3:30 a.m., an arsonist poured gasoline ont the hallway floor just inside the second floor Ponet doo touched it off and fled. This was the exact spot where the Squa 4 firefighter stepped through the flooring. The motive? Perhaps spite. The Dorothy Mae's tenants were closely-relate through marriage and friendships. Were there jealousies whic prompted a revengeful touchoff? Or was the fire set by vandal? At least one street gang was known to have earlie damaged the Dorothy Mae.

Char measurements taken from floor joists at the point o origin showed deep penetration. That suggested the fire wa burning at least 30 minutes before the alarm. Firespread patterns indicated the accelerated fire burned down through th floor over the boiler room, then spread horizontally and vertically up at least one shaft. This scenario could explain what se off fires in the two apartments which were beside a shaft. Bu there was a likelier explanation as we shall shortly see.

The second floor fire spread the entire length of the corrido and smoke banked at the front and rear inner Ponet door Why did the smoke detectors not immediately sound th alarm? Because they were located inside the apartments, no the corridor. Eventually, smoke penetrated the tiny air space around the doors, entered the apartments and the alarms wer off.

Second floor tenants were awakened by the alarms, opene their doors, found that smoke and heat was not unbearable an quickly exited through the rear Ponets, even though many o them could have fled faster through the front. Why? Peopl tend to leave by the same route they came in. Dorothy Ma tenants invariably used the rear doors leading to the parkin lot. As second floor tenants exited, the Ponets automaticall closed behind them. Each opening, however, probably let i more oxygen to encourage combustion.

About this time, third floor tenants were awakened by th smoke detector cacophony underneath them and the sounds o people hurrying from the building. Fourth floor tenants probably heard nothing because the Ponets provided sound barrier as well as life savers. No second or fourth floor tenant wa killed. All 25 casualties, including 10 members of one famil lived in third floor apartments.

Why didn't those victims stay in their rooms as LAFD public awareness programs had emphasized for years? For tha answer, we must consider the plausible explanation given by third floor tenant who described how she was awakened by th commotion, opened her door, discovered a somewhat smok and warm hallway, but thought she had plenty of time t escape before the fire worsened. She quickly dressed and pr

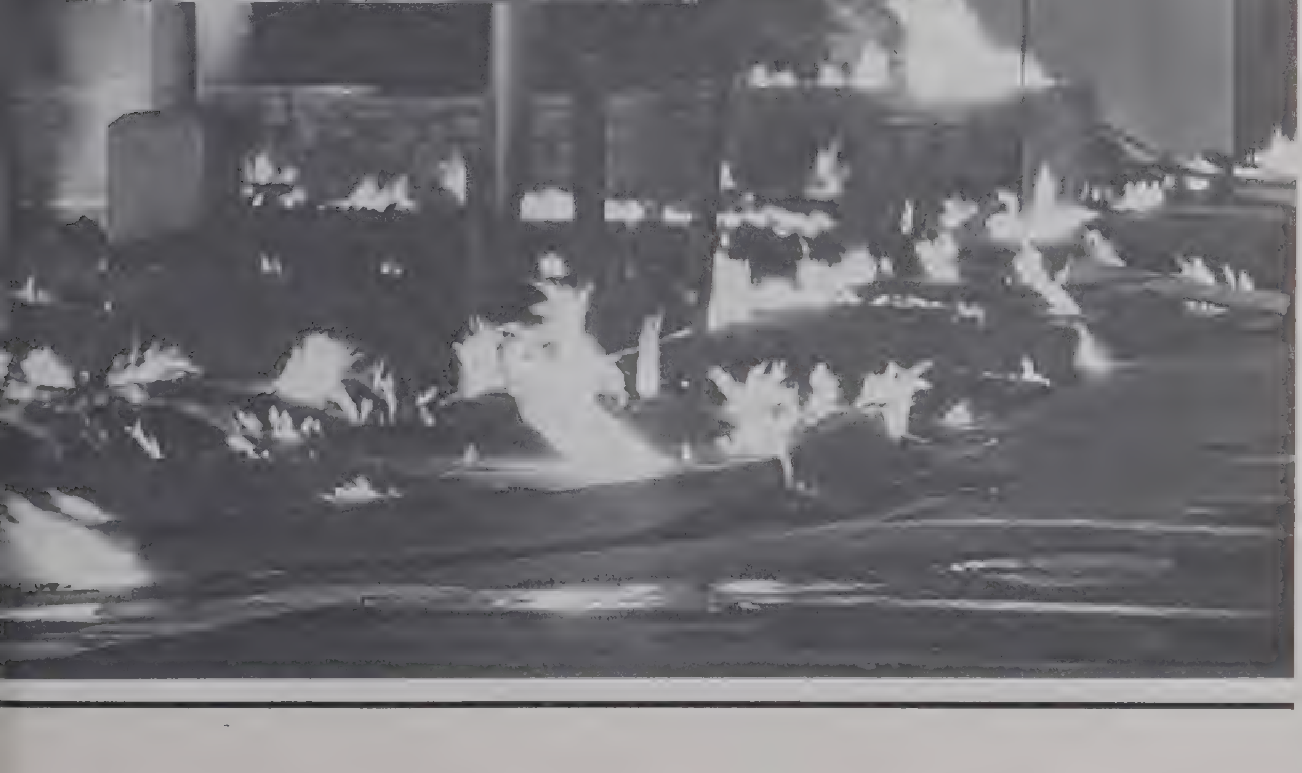
MIKE MEADOWS/LOS ANGELES TIMES

Shoppers in the Ross Dress For Less Department store, Third Street and Ogden Drive, miraculously escaped death, Sunday afternoon, March 24, 1985, when a violent explosion ripped through the building. The explosion was caused when odorless methane gas permeated the store from an underground gas pocket.

Seventeen fire companies, eight rescue-ambulances, six support units and five Los Angeles County Fire Department companies quickly knocked down a fire in the Ross annex and attended casualties, while evacuating the area. Total recorded injuries came to 22. All recovered.

The incident might have become a fairly routine operation until firefighters and paramedics were baffled by something unlike anything they had seen in their careers. Flames and shimmering waves of heat were spewing from the ground. Numerous fires shot from openings in and around sidewalks, curbs and pavement cracks as the methane freely-burned.

Sensing the possibility of worse explosions, a large area around Farmers Market was evacuated. A team of LAFD, well-drilling, petroleum, geological and other experts, jointly theorized the only way to alleviate the underground pressure buildup was to lance the oil and gas-bearing zone with a well. By controlling the gas pressure and burnoff with valves, the problem might be solved. The unusual operation required days, but the ground fires all but self-extinguished when a flare was used to ignite the controlled escaping vapors at the well opening. Estimates put the size of the methane gas problem at an incredible 500,000-700,000 cubic feet.



KEITH D. CULLOM/SANTA BARBARA COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

The worst crash involving LAFD apparatus occurred January 23, 1983, while Truck 15 was returning from a false alarm. A speeding car, southbound on Vermont Avenue, ran a signal at Jefferson Boulevard and slammed into the truck. All eight occupants of the auto were killed. Four truckmen were injured in the crash. The car's driver was intoxicated.

pared to flee with her infant daughter.

How did smoke and heat get through the closed third floor Ponet door? Possibly because many fleeing ahead of her had, each time they opened the door, admitted smoke and heat. But the investigation was to develop a better explanation.

About this time — 4:10 a.m. — the manager who lived in a building behind the Dorothy Mae, was awakened by what he thought was a drunk. Looking outside, he saw smoke coming from the open fourth floor fire escape door. That smoke was being sucked up the rear stairshaft by the draft created by the opening and closing of the second and third floor Ponet doors. It is probable the fire had by now invaded the rear stairshaft.

The manager ran across the alley and heard his niece screaming from inside. He opened the outside exit, then the first Ponet and saw her standing in the stairwell. She was apparently disoriented by smoke. Grabbing her wrist to pull her out, he steadfastly told of a "noise like the fire was breathing in and out." This non-firefighter was describing flashover conditions. Before he could save his niece, the manager said there was a "loud swish like a muffled explosion." He lost his grip, was blown backwards and suffered burns.

The manager's niece was among those killed when the in-rushing oxygen caused the fire to flash in the second floor stairwell, shoot up the third floor staircase and vent out the open doors on the top floor. Those killed were exiting the third floor exactly as the woman living there told investigators. Just as the manager was about to open those doors, she was hurrying down the hallway with her infant in her arms. Smoke and heat worsened. She tripped and fell, perhaps over someone downed by smoke. That's where she was found, along with the body of her infant. The young woman died shortly after telling her story to investigators.

Why didn't that inner Ponet door protect her and all the third floor tenants? It probably did. Up to a point. The location of one of the children's bodies is significant. The flash caught the child while he was passing through the Ponet. That's where the fire got him. That's where he fell. That's where he died and with his body blocking the door open, that's how the fire
spread along the third floor corridor.

All victims were engulfed by the blowtorch coming at the
as they unknowingly, and obviously confidently expecting t
escape, ran straight into death. This helps to explain the tot
body burns as well as the unusual positions they were foun
They were walking or running when the searing flash caug
them. Some instinctively put up their arms to ward off th
inevitable, while the impact of the powerful flashover se
them sprawling.

The Dorothy Mae proved the value of Ponet doors an
smoke detectors, because at least 75 percent of the tenant
escaped. Had the others remained in their rooms, they likel
would have survived, too. More significantly, the Doroth
Mae showed that people cannot be depended upon, much le
be expected, to immediately turn in an alarm and remain i
their rooms until firefighters arrive, if their escape path seem
clear. If people will not, or cannot, turn in an alarm when a fi
occurs, especially when they are sleeping and not knowing
their danger, then automatic alarms which will protect the
are necessary.

While Arson Investigator Mike Camello was heading th
LAFD team working with Los Angeles homicide officers i
their continuing investigation, the fire prevention bureau w
active, too. An ordinance which further closed loopholes i
built-in fire safety measures was proposed and approved o
May 16, 1984. Some 1301 apartment and hotel building owne
were given three years to comply. Among the significant pr
visions of the Dorothy Mae Ordinance is the requirement th
all interior stairways, hallways, exits and storage or closet are
be equipped with an automatic sprinkler system. That syste
must be connected to alerting devices that loudly sound a
alarm throughout the building.

Still another provision of the ordinance requires that an
room that has a door which opens into an interior hallwa
stairway or exitway, must have a sprinkler head located imm
diately inside the room nearest the door. Each apartment
guest room door must have self-closing devices if it open
into an interior stairway, hallway or exit. The combined effe
of ordinances enacted after the Ponet Square, the Stratfor
Apartment and the Dorothy Mae disasters became nation
models.

The Dorothy Mae arson case was one of the most intensiv
and lengthy investigations in the history of both the LAFD an
LAPD. Humberto de la Torre, 21, was arrested December 1
1982, by Mexican authorities in El Salitre. He voluntarily re
turned to Los Angeles with LAPD officers and was charge
with first degree murder. Arson Investigator Camello said de l
Torre set the fire following an argument with his uncle, th
manager, of the Dorothy Mae, over the youth's involvement i
marijuana, gang activities and graffiti spray-painted in th
hotel.

De la Torre said he acted alone when he obtained a gallo
can of gasoline, entered the Dorothy Mae's front door, opene
the Ponet door, poured the gasoline on the wood floor immed
ately inside it and flicked a match into it. The location was th
exact spot where the Squad 4 firefighter had stepped throug
the fire-weakened flooring. The suspect said he had at lea
eight relatives living in the Dorothy Mae. He was charged wit
25 counts of first degree murder. On June 28, 1985, de la Tor
was sentenced by Superior Court Judge Robert R. Devich
625 years in prison: a quarter of a century for each of th
victims.

Nineteen days after the Dorothy Mae fire, the LAFD lost i
first and only paramedic who died in the line of duty durin
the LAFD's first century of service. Paramedics James T. Fit
patrick and Marsha L. Purefoy of Rescue 105 were dispatche
at 6:21 p.m., September 23, 1982, to a report of a traffic accide
at Fallbrook Avenue and Califa Street. The paramedics foun

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

Paramedic James T. Fitzpatrick
Rescue 105
Died of cardiac arrest at accident
September 23, 1982

at Lisa Leaper, 18, had been thrown from a horse in a vacant t 100 yards west of Fallbrook.

Leaper was about to be placed on a gurney when Fitzpatrick llapsed from a heart attack. Purefoy radioed for help and gan attempting to resuscitate Fitzpatrick. Rescue 104 and gine 84 were sent. The teenager was transported to Parkood Hospital. Paramedics and Parkwood emergency room aff personnel were unable to revive Fitzpatrick, 58, who was onounced dead at 8 p.m.

Donald O. Manning, who would lead the LAFD into its ntennial year celebrations, was named chief engineer on nuary 20, 1983, two days before his 51st birthday. Manning's years on the department were most notably marked by the riod he served as project director of the internationally-gnificant Playa del Rey home fire detector and sprinkler sts. Not as well known were his many years as a firefighter, cluding service with the famed Squad 23 Green Hornets.

Manning joined the LAFD on December 19, 1955. During s early years on the job he was respectively assigned to gine 24, 28, Salvage 28, Squad 23 and Engine 23; all in the downtown area. Promoted to captain, October, 1967, Manning was initially assigned to Truck 28 and then to Truck 35, Engine 14, Truck 29 and Engine 10. Manning was a Task Force 27 Commander when he was appointed battalion chief, June 23, 1974, and assigned to Battalion 13 and later Battalion 1.

Donald O. Manning was appointed chief engineer on January 20, 1983.

Named assistant chief, March 19, 1979, Manning was assigned to Division 2 in the south end of the city and was staff assistant chief when he was promoted to deputy chief, March 24, 1981. He was in command of the bureau of support services at the time he was appointed chief engineer.

When named chief engineer, two of Manning's three sons were department apparatus operators: Terry at Fire Station 33 and Tim at Fire Station 50. Terry and Tim Manning later earned promotions to captain and were assigned to Engines 52 and 65, respectively.

While considering the civil service list of the top three candidates, the fire commission and Mayor Bradley made it clear that one of the new chief engineer's primary responsibilities was to bring women firefighters into the department. That program had begun during Chief Engineer Gerard's administration. Women had tried, but all had failed to graduate from the drill tower.

The inevitability of women firefighters as members of the LAFD was acknowledged by most of the men in the fire stations. That did not, of course, mean they were receptive to the idea. The LAFD administration recognized, however, that federal agencies could force the issue, as they had in other cities where women were hired by lowering the standards required of male candidates. The results were expectably poor in nearly all cities.

In July, 1983, the LAFD initiated a pre-drill tower tutorial program at the former signal office at Westlake Park. The building was converted into a training center with probably the finest physical fitness development equipment west of the Mississippi River. The tutorial program placed special emphasis upon developing upper body strength in preparation for the department's physical abilities test. Attendance by interested women candidates is voluntary.

Upon completion of the tutorial program, the 10 to 15 most-likely-to-succeed women candidates advance to the pre-trainee program which began in August, 1983. The six-week program further emphasizes increased upper body strength to assist women candidates in passing the same physical abilities test required of all candidates. Also during pre-training, the basic duties of firefighters are taught. At the conclusion of the program, candidates are given the difficult LAFD physical abilities test. Women who pass that test and an oral examination with scores falling within those of their male counterparts then advance into the trainee program.

Started in September, 1983, the trainee program is designed to eliminate the major causes of recruit termination from the training academy: academic and physical coordination problems. This co-educational program lasts 10 weeks and includes a 96-hour emergency medical technician course and an introduction to the physical demands of firefighting, such as ladder and hose operations.

The final step is the 10-week training academy program lasting 10 hours a day. Male and female recruits are rigorously drilled in all aspects of firefighting. Upon graduation, recruits are probationally assigned to fire stations for one year. Upon successful completion of additional training during that probationary year, the firefighter — male or female — can look forward to a career with many opportunities for advancement. Women are housed in the same dormitories as the men and use the same facilities.

On February 25, 1984, the LAFD graduated its first two women firefighters in a class of 62 candidates. The following morning, Firefighters Joanne Cameron, a native of Plainfield,

This training center was a cornerstone of a pre-drill tower tutorial program for developing upper body strength in preparation for the LAFD's physical fitness test. Jennifer Boscoe volunteered for the program and later became a LAFD firefighter.

New Jersey, and Julie Gardner who was born in Burbank, California, reported for probationary duty at Fire Station 33 on the busy south side of the city and were assigned to Truck 33. By the time the department celebrated its 100th birthday, there were 10 women firefighters assigned to LAFD stations. The department's administration hopes for many more and is vigorously recruiting those seemingly one-in-a-million women who meet the qualifications to become members of the LAFD.

Viewed from an historical perspective, the assimilation of women into traditionally all-male fire stations in Los Angeles can be traced to the long, but ultimately successful, integration of black firefighters assigned to two all-black stations to firehouses throughout the department. Starting in 1978, moreover, the first women paramedics began entering the department. By the centennial year, there were 33 LAFD women paramedics serving throughout the city. There is no question that they pioneered the way for the women firefighters who followed them. Basic to the success of women paramedics and firefighters working with their male counterparts was the strong direction given to the program by the LAFD administration, including Fire Commissioner Ann Reiss Lane and Chief Engineers Gerard and Manning.

For years, firefighters rehearsed the scenario for that inevitable time when a disastrous fire ravaged Paramount Pictures Studio in Hollywood. Pre-planning focused upon the New York Street back lot as well as two adjacent city street scenes sprawling over more than two acres of sets so realistic that dummy fire hydrants could fool firefighters. The 96,000-square-foot New York Street area had been the locale for hundreds of famous films and television series, including *Godfather I and II, Laverne and Shirley, Chinatown, Going My Way* and *The Bells of St. Mary's.* The false-front sets, with their flammable fiberglass veneer simulating brickwork, were around three stories tall.

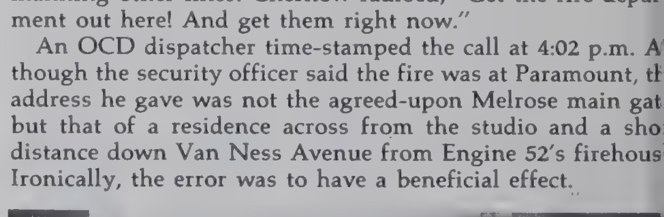
These facades of tenements and stores were backed and supported by wooden frameworks: a forest of wood that had been aging and drying for years. Firefighting would be treacherously difficult because of the tightly nestled airplane hangar-sized sound stages which often had flammable outdoor se
attached to exterior walls. Jam-packed into this conflagratio
breeding ground were scenery and costume storage war
houses and dozens of other structures.

The New York back lot, located deep inside the congeste
54-acre compound, was difficult for apparatus to reach by th
maze of narrow streets which not only limited maneuverabilit
but failed to provide firebreaks. The quickest way to mov
around the studio was by bicycle or golf cart. Los Angele
firefighters honed their gameplan with the studio's Sam Che
now, who, retiring after 36 years as a LAFD firefighter, was i
his fifth year as Paramount's fire chief.

That gameplan would start upon discovery of a fire. Che
now would race to the fire aboard his golf cart while the LAF
was being notified and given the main gate address: 55
Melrose Avenue. Chernow would initiate a holding action wit
studio standpipe-supplied hoselines operated by himself, secu
rity officers and studio employees. The LAFD would dispatch
larger-than-normal assignment of apparatus, including Engi
52, which tradition says was opened in 1924 to provide a quic
hitting capability at Paramount and was located almost acro
the street from the eastern perimeter of the studio.

Around mid-afternoon, August 26, 1983, LAFD Fire Inspe
tor Harry Morck made a routine inspection of Paramount wi
Chernow. They found 17 motor vehicles blocking access to th
New York Street back lot and ordered them moved. That jo
was underway as Morck returned to his LAFD headquarte
office. About 30 minute later, a security officer called Cherno
to report a fire on New York Street. Chernow raced there wi
his golf cart and found rapidly-spreading flames. He attack
with a small hoseline and was soon joined by studio worke
manning other lines. Chernow radioed, "Get the fire depar
ment out here! And get them right now."

An OCD dispatcher time-stamped the call at 4:02 p.m. A
though the security officer said the fire was at Paramount, th
address he gave was not the agreed-upon Melrose main gat
but that of a residence across from the studio and a sho
distance down Van Ness Avenue from Engine 52's firehous
Ironically, the error was to have a beneficial effect.



*Engine 52 firefighters, the first company to arrive at the August 26, 198
Paramount Pictures Studio fire, took a position in a narrow alley separati
two huge sound stages, one of which was burning and the other was filli
with smoke.*

Task Force 26 firefighters and other companies go into master stream operaion while battling flames which destroyed New York street scene sets coverng more than two acres on the backlot of Paramount Pictures Studio in Hollywood.

The initial dispatch was Engine 52, Task Force 29, Engine 82, Light Force 27, Squad 27 and Battalion 5 Chief Jim O'Neill. Engine 82 was participating in a brush fire training exercise atop Hollywood's Mount Lee. It would take Engine 82 some 23 minutes to wind its way down the mountain to Paramount. Engine 27 was, therefore, special-called and Light Force 27 became a full task force.

As the alarm came in at Engine 52, Capt. Steve Varney and his firefighters ran for their 1970 Seagrave triple combination pumper. Varney glanced out the open doors of the firehouse. A towering column of charcoal-colored smoke, with monstrous fireballs swirling inside it, was rolling hundreds of feet over Paramount. "Except for the color of the smoke, it looked like we had an oil refinery going," said Varney. The awesome cloud was immediately seen by Task Force 29 Commander Mike Ambarian as that apparatus pulled out of quarters about a mile from the studio. "We have a good loomup!" Ambarian radioed at 4:03 p.m.

Engine 52 quickly entered Paramount's Lemon Grove gate, picked up a security guard and, as they wound their way through the compound, Varney radioed at 4:04 p.m., "We're on the scene. We have a large loomup. We're laying hose going in. I'll give you a better sizeup in a minute." All 600 feet of three-and-one-half-inch supply line spilled in Engine 52's wake as the firefighters approached the fire via a narrow street separating Sound Stages 15 and 16. The solid wall of flame was so intense that firefighters could not see the full scope of involvement, but knew the entire New York Street area was beyond saving.

Radiant heat ignited the false-front set attached to the outside of Stage 15. Flames were invading the 250-by-300-foot cavernous building which stood about 100 feet tall. Radiant heat also was threatening Stage 16 and other sound stages nearby. "Double the initial response," Varney radioed at 4:07. "And get us two helicopters for perimeter observation." Chief O'Neill, monitoring Engine 52's messages as he responded, saw the horrendous smoke cloud and radioed: "Change the additional companies request for assistance to five task forces and five triples."

That unusually heavy assignment of companies was only five minutes into the fire. It would take many more than that to handle this long-expected disaster. Within minutes, more alarms called a total of 40 engines, 16 aerial ladders and four paramedic rescue-ambulances, in addition to support units and staff personnel.

Varney quickly made some difficult decisions. Engine 52 was in a perilous spot in the narrow alley between burning Sound Stage 15 and 16 which was filling with smoke. Engine 52's initial attack included use of the wagon battery to sweep the flames that were chewing through the set attached to the exterior wall of Stage 15 and to provide water curtain protection against radiated heat. Engine 52 firefighters stretched hoselines to protect exterior and interior sound stage exposures. Before they were done, the apparatus was completely stripped of hose.

Varney's commitment to this holding action until help arrived was cause for concern. Studio water pressure was unsatisfactory and the water supply could be lost at any moment as sprinkler heads began triggering inside Sound Stage 15. (Chernow later found that 45 heads went off.) Without adequate water and with the fire continuing its steamroller action, firefighters' lives could be jeopardized and the apparatus lost.

Heightening this concern were the cyclonically swirling flames. Their intensity eagerly sucked in air from the bottom and pulled flames downward to involve lower portions of the facades. The shrill wind sounds created by the raging column of fire vied with that of the blast furnace roaring of the flames. Engine 52 Firefighters John Dallas and Bob Hernandez braved the heat as they attacked with hoselines, while Engineer O'Dell Warren coaxed the Seagrave to its full 1500-gallon-per minute capacity.

Task Force 27 was nearing Paramount. Instead of following the gameplan and coming in from the west, Task Force Commander Barney Nipp, seeing the worsening loomup over Paramount, wisely chose to go the east side, because that was the alarm address. The Van Ness approach would, therefore, put his company closer to the fireground. Nipp's decision perhaps saved Engine 52 as Task Force 27 laid a water supply line into the studio from an eight-inch main along Van Ness. Engine 52 quickly switched to 27's relayed water. The apparatus and the Engine 52 firefighters still were not out of danger, but they were at least assured of dependable water.

Truck 27 quickly aerial-laddered Sound Stage 15 and firefighters began opening up the roof in a trench cut extending almost the entire width of the tall, airplane hangar-sized building. That, too, was highly risky as flames lapping from the blazing false front fascia on the exterior wall imperiled firefighters and necessitated their protection with an umbrella-like spray of water. Even without these heavy smoke and fire lapping conditions, plus the near-record above 90-degree heat, ventilation was going to be a grueling, difficult job.

Sound Stage 15's roof was typical of those in film studios. About an inch of tarpaper covered sturdy two-by-six-inch tongue-in-groove wood planking which was angularly overlapped in places by more wood sheathing. Under the planking was thick, soundproofing insulation batting which had to be punched out with pike poles. It was slow, exhausting and frustrating work as the chain and rotary saws were quickly dulled by the stout planking and gummy tarpaper.

Chief O'Neill had some challenging command decisions as dozens of fire companies converged upon Paramount. The major threat was not altogether what was burning, but what was in immediate danger of burning. It is difficult to imagine that a worse fireload could have existed inside Sound Stage 15 than the multi-million dollar set for *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock,* which was due to start filming. The set simulated a mountain scene rigged for explosions and fiery jets following the film's earthquake scenario. To heighten realism, the set was fashioned from a wooden superstructure and molded fiberglass, polystyrene, foam and other flammables. If the New York Street fire invaded Stage 15 and ignited the set, millions would be lost, in addition to costly delays in shooting schedules. Worse, firefighters would have two major fires confronting them: each requiring different tactics and both creating an even larger fire that could likely spread to other sound stages and scenery storage warehouses.

Ideal tactics would have been to build a tight perimeter of master streams around the two-and-one-half acre New York Street maelstrom to provide both water curtain protection of exposures and direct fire attack, while focusing efforts upon prevention of further extension of flames into Sound Stage 15. Ideal, yes. Practical, no, because of the back lot's congestion and accessibility problems. If O'Neill committed to fixed master stream operations with many pieces of apparatus, he would lose flexibility, mobility and perhaps some apparatus if the situation soured. There was a distinct possibility of a second, third or more outbreaks of major structural fires in the tightly-packed compound where it was difficult to turn an auto around, much less fire apparatus.

In essence, O'Neill's problems and tactics, which soon-to-arrive Division 1 Chief Mike Mitchell and Deputy Chief Don Anthony concurred in, were these:

*1. **Core of the fire:** New York Street sets covering some 96,000 square-feet of heavy fire involvement. No hope of saving them.*

*2. **Eastern exposure.** Worst threat. Sound Stages 15 and 16 in jeopardy, along with similarly-sized sound stages close by.*

*3. **Southern exposure:** Biggest worry was a scenery storage warehouse crammed with a heavy fireload of flammable props. Involvement would create a severe problem.*

*4. **Western exposure:** Sound stages jammed in there, too. With a wind change these could become major fires.*

*5. **Northern exposure:** Metalclad scenery storage buildings. At least one of the larger ones was igniting from radiated heat and direct flame impingement. Beyond these scenery lofts was a tall stone wall and Hollywood Park Memorial Cemetery which provided a green belt and little expectancy of major problems.*

Tactics:

Through a combination of good pre-fire planning, luck and coincidence Engine 52 and Task Force 27 were ideally anchoring the eastern side of the fire. On the other flanks, the tightest possible perimeter of master streams from aerial ladder pipes, Task Force 29's Squrt, wagon batteries, as well as portable monitors and handlines were set. This heavy-duty concentration of fixed and portable streams provided the needed flexibility and mobility if fire conditions changed.

Other incoming companies were ordered to take up battle-ready positions in a staging area along Gower Street on the western side of the fire, thus providing the nearest access to the fireground. Keeping the fireground commitment of apparatus to only what was necessary, the companies in staging would provide additional hoselines, fresh personnel to relieve these on the fireground and, best of all, an insurance policy for fast deployment of apparatus and firefighters if unexpected problems arose.

One of those problems was not long in developing. Updrafts created by the fire cast firebrands and pushed radiated heat upwind. Burning embers ignited grass fires and palm trees in the cemetery. Radiated heat melted glass skylights in the cemetery's mausoleum. Task Forces 15 and 50 were quickly drawn from staging and deployed into the cemetery. The companies went into ladder pipe operation as twin streams shot over the Paramount wall and bored into the flames, including those consuming a gigantic scenery storage dock. Firebrands, meanwhile, landed among the tombstones marking the graves of Rudolph Valentino, Tyrone Power, Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., Paul Muni and Nelson Eddy.

MIKE MEADOWS/L

On July 27, 1984, the eve of the start of the Olympic Games in Los Angeles, motorist intentionally drove onto a Westwood sidewalk and ran down 5 pedestrians, one of whom was killed. The major multi-casualty inciden brought a LAFD response including 12 paramedic rescue-ambulances and 1 fire companies to assist in first aid treatment and transportation of victims t hospitals.

Inch-by-inch, foot-by-foot, firefighters checked the flamin onslaught before it touched off Sound Stage 15 as the battl raged. After more than two hours of some of the most exhausting firefighting efforts and ventilation work in LAFD history the fire was at last contained. Except for some water damage the *Star Trek* set was saved. Paramount officials estimate damage at $3 million. Arson investigators determined that th fire was incendiary.

The LAFD's tradition of pre-planning was put to its mos challenging test with the announcement that the 1984 Olympi Games would be held in the Los Angeles area, July 28 throug August 12. The games would sprawl over 23 sites along a 200 mile corridor extending from around Santa Barbara on th north to near San Diego on the south.

Two Olympic Villages, one at the University of California a Los Angeles (UCLA) and the other at the University of Southern California (USC) along with seven game venues and th press center were to be located in Los Angeles.

In addition to thousands of athletes, coaches and representatives from 150 nations, a study by Economics Research Associates projected 700,000 out-of-town visitors. From severe traffi congestion, which would delay routine and Olympic-relate fire and emergency medical services, the LAFD also had to pla for the worst possible scenarios, including major disasters such as an earthquake and multi-casualty incidents in th event of terrorist attacks.

Under the supervision of Deputy Chief Darrel E. Thompson the department created an Olympic Games coordinating section, headed by Battalion Chief Clark V. Cornwell. In additio to planning LAFD commitments to the 23rd Olympiad, th

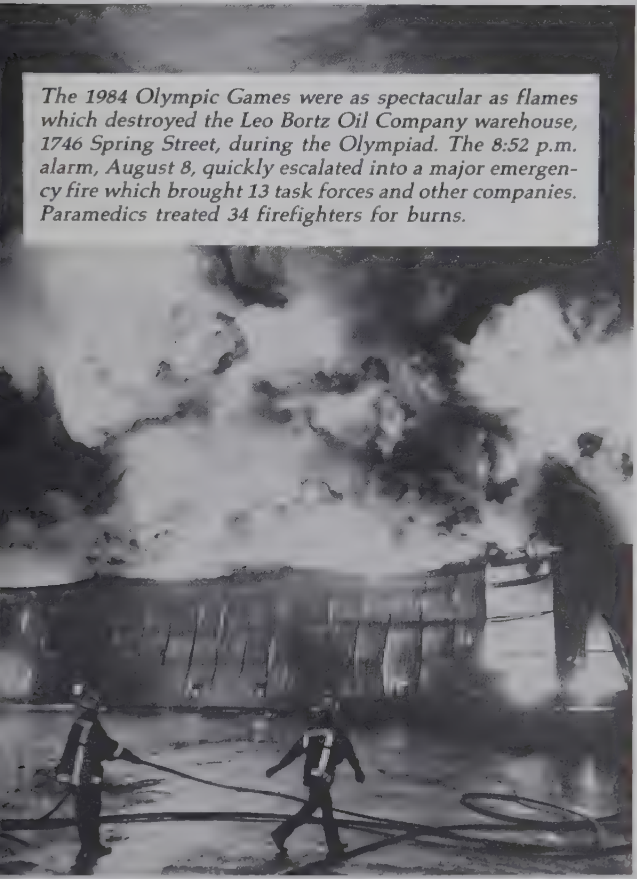
AFD coordinated fire and related protection with every fire epartment that had Olympics responsibilities outside of the ity. The department would, moreover, interface with numerus local, state, national and international agencies.

Olympics planning involved every element of the LAFD. he bureau of fire suppression developed scenarios to cope ith traffic congestion, bomb threats, terrorist activities, prencident planning of Olympic-related occupancies, multi-casulty incidents and a potential major brush fire. Fire suppresion forces and paramedic rescue-ambulances would be pre-eployed in and around Olympic Villages and venues. More han 40 firefighters and paramedics were trained in rapelling rom helicopters and taking their equipment with them in argo nets lowered from helicopters.

Working closely with Chief Paramedic Jon Fasana, head of he bureau of emergency medical services, Olympic planners eveloped many contingency plans to insure routine as well as nusual medical service demands. Twelve reserve rescue-amulances were activated to augment the existing fleet of 48. The eserve ambulances would mainly be deployed near villages nd venues along the fastest response routes and in areas of igh visitor density.

Deputy Chief Craig Drummond, fire marshal and head of he fire prevention bureau, worked with the department's lympics planning teams as bureau inspectors developed fire-fe safety plans for the games. Bureau personnel inspected ames' construction sites, reviewed and approved plans for lympic Villages and venues and continued these inspections uring construction phases. More than 200 safety watches by re inspectors and others would be scheduled at Olympic sites.

After years of planning, everything was in place long before he evening of July 27, 1984, the day before the games officially egan. There was, as usual, that Friday night, a festive aura in Westwood Village, a shopping center near UCLA. Weekend nights were especially busy in Westwood as thousands of people were attracted to first-run motion picture theatres, music stores, restaurants and other retail establishments catering to young people. Automobile and pedestrian congestion on Westwood Boulevard was unusually heavy that night due to the imminence of the games and the many people who came to Westwood in hopes of seeing athletes and looking into the sprawling UCLA Olympic Village which was fenced and under tight security.



The 1984 Olympic Games were as spectacular as flames which destroyed the Leo Bortz Oil Company warehouse, 1746 Spring Street, during the Olympiad. The 8:52 p.m. alarm, August 8, quickly escalated into a major emergency fire which brought 13 task forces and other companies. Paramedics treated 34 firefighters for burns.

Shortly before 9 o'clock that evening, Daniel Young deliberately veered his automobile onto the crowded sidewalk at Westwood Boulevard and Weyburn Avenue. Accelerating his car, Young mowed down dozens of pedestrians as he sped along the sidewalk for 550-feet until he slammed into a bus bench at Westwood and Kinross Avenue. In his wake lay 54 pedestrians, including a young woman who was dying. At 8:54 p.m., OCD dispatched Engine 37 and Rescue-Ambulance 37 to the Kinross intersection. As more reports of the severity of the tragedy were received, Battalion 9 Chief Anthony Gentile, Light Force 37 and more rescue ambulances were sent. Gentile called for five additional ambulances and as many fire companies.

With dozens of severely injured people strewn along an entire city block, the erroneous story spread that this was an Olympics-related act of terrorism. Thanks to Olympics planning, extra paramedics and LAFD resources, including four rescue-ambulances and a light force were deployed near the UCLA Olympic Village. Even at that, response times were slowed because Westwood was in a virtual state of traffic gridlock.

The major multi-casualty incident response brought a total of 12 paramedic rescue-ambulances, seven private ambulances and 15 fire companies to assist in first aid treatment and transportation of patients to surrounding hospitals. Despite the chaotic situation and the extraordinary number of casualties, many of them suffering major traumatic injuries, the fire department concluded its participation in the incident in only 66 minutes. After psychiatric evaluation, Young was found guilty of one count of murder, 33 counts of attempted murder and 17 counts of causing great bodily injury. He was sentenced to life in prison.

Years from now, when firefighters compare memories of classic fires, the miracle at the Fickett Towers high-rise apartments will loom large as a supreme example of the combined effects of built-in fire safety, public education and a razor-sharp command system coordinating firefighting, search and rescue, evacuation and paramedic professionalism. The links of that miracle began to be forged by the systematic efforts of the LAFD's fire safety education unit and Fickett Towers' management which individually, and together, taught residents the do's-and-don'ts of high-rise fire safety and evacuation.

Escape routes were clearly shown. The 10-year-old Fickett had, moreover, considerable built-in fire protection. There were smoke detectors in all apartments, hallways and elsewhere throughout the building. There were two fire alarm pull stations on each floor. Activation of any one of them would set off alarms on every floor. Sprinklers were not legally required, except in trash chutes. Wet and dry standpipe systems laced the building and were fed by a 3400 gallon rooftop tank. Exterior standpipe connections were for fire department use. The fire-resistant high-rise had solid-core, fire-impeding doors to each of the 198 units. The possibility of a major life loss fire in the Fickett seemed extremely unlikely. But as history has so often shown, the unlikely fire is the one that can swiftly occur with deadly results.

DAVID R. WESTFALL

An incendiary fire started in a condominium complex under construction quickly spread to the Fickett Towers high-rise apartments for senior citizens; many of whom were sleeping. Fast work by the LAFD resulted in the safe evacuation of 230 elderly people. There were no serious injuries in the July 22, 1984, blaze.

Fire safety, evacuation and pre-planning programs were well in place that Sunday night, July 22, 1984, when one or more arsonists sloshed gasoline inside an unfinished wood-framed condominium complex under construction next door to the Fickett. The complex could best be likened to a three-story vertical lumberyard sprawling over an area of 75,000-square-feet. A Fickett resident, glancing from his window, saw fire in the next-door condo complex, called the fire department, looked again and saw flames spreading with unbelievable speed.

At 10:20 p.m., OCD dispatched Task Forces 39 and 90, Engine 100, Squad 39 and Battalion 10 Chief Don Cate. Even that early into the incident the fiery glare could be seen throughout the San Fernando Valley. First-arriving firefighters were confronted with interlocking problems: An enormous body of fire engulfing the condo complex, radiated heat imminently threatening a 12-story high-rise where some 230 elderly people, nearly half of them in their eighties and nineties, would have to be saved. Many of them were sleeping. Many suffered infirmities and many were standing in windows while waving whatever they could to attract help. Cliff McGee, the Fickett's resident building administrator, later said, "I was afraid we were going to lose 200 people."

Cate radioed a sizeup and called for two more task forces — 88 and 89 — and another triple combination engine — 81 — immediately upon arriving at the fire on Sherman Way near Kester Avenue, in a mostly residential area of Van Nuys. The Fickett stood at a 45-degree angle to the blazing condos. At its nearest point, the high-rise was only 30 feet from the fire. The exterior finish on the Fickett was emitting thick black and gray smoke and windows were cracking from the radiated heat.

Cate knew it would be but a few minutes before problems were severely compounded as fire invaded the Fickett. Also worrisome was the large Van Nuys First Baptist Church school and gymnasium across Sherman Way. Heat was breaking windows in the church complex, 150 feet from the fire Division 3 Assistant Chief Jack Bennett had heard Cate's initial sizeup. Immediately responding, he called en route for helicopter to provide an overview.

Arriving at the fire, Bennett ordered four additional task forces — 73, 60, 93 and 98; three more triples — 83, 99 and 103 plus another three rescue-ambulances, 39, 89 and 100. Responding, too, were Senior Paramedics Donald Lee and Jim Denney, who would set up a medical division for triaging From Bennett's greater alarm orders at 10:34 p.m., his call-up rapidly grew to a total of 32 companies and eight rescue ambulances.

First-arriving Rescue-Ambulance 39 notified the Los Angeles County Medical Alert Center, which immediately contacted the 10 closest hospitals, told them to standby for multiple-casualty incident and requested reports of bed availability for 100 patients. That information was relayed to th paramedics.

Bennett established a command post on Sherman Way whil activating the department's incident command system in th high-rise mode. Even as his aide, Gary Clinite, was setting u command post equipment on the hood of the chief's sedan radiated heat ignited draperies in a heat-shattered second floo apartment window. Flames quickly spread to other combustibles in the unit. Heat also shattered more windows and invaded other apartments on the second and third floors and apartments on six floors above. Fire was showing in at least 2 windows. Many more were cracking as heat stabbed the high-rise.

Certainly the most vivid description of the rapidity with hich radiant heat shattered windows and set fires in apart-ents on nine floors, as opposed to the normal expectancy of ames lapping upward, floor-by-floor, came from Bennett: We had three or four floors going when I first started to talk ith Helicopter Pilot Howard Payne and his observer, Helitak-irefighter Gerry Cook. It seemed that every time they made an rbit around the building they were reporting another floor as involved."

Nobody on the fireground realized it at the time, but LAFD refighters and paramedics were doing what they might expect see in classroom chalkboard diagrams, or read about in xtbooks, but never encounter in real life. Incoming compan-s and chiefs were radio-directed to approach the fireground rom the east on Sherman Way to insure orderly deployment pon arrival. Companies were usually split as they approached nd requested orders. Half were assigned to search, rescue, vacuation and ventilation, while the others were ordered into irect attack on each fire floor.

While pumpers laid supply lines into exterior standpipe onnections, firefighters on each floor stretched their hose-acks and used the building's houselines, until pumpers began upplying water to their own lines. Search and rescue teams ethodically checked all apartments. Making certain occu-ants had fled or were rescued, they then closed the doors and halked them with an "X" to avoid duplication by later-arriv-ng fire attack teams.

Flames consuming the condos were, for the most part, at-cked by first alarm companies. The problem required stan-ard procedures: Surround and attack with hoselines, wagon atteries, ladder pipes and other large streams. It was a night of ndividual initiative and heroism. Some unknown firefighter revented tenants from exiting by a mid-point stairway on the re side of the Fickett. He singlehandedly stopped many flee-ng tenants, who either had not heard or disregarded orders to se the north stairway. Without his quick-thinking, tenants vould have exited directly into the deadly heat and torrential ain of broken window glass.

Paramedics had their phase of the operation well in-hand before the arrival of Dr. Greg Palmer, the department's newly-appointed medical director. Under the direction of Senior Paramedics Lee and Denney, a care-holding area was established on a lawn across Sherman Way. Yellow salvage covers were spread. Immediate, minor and delayed care areas were specifically designated. Evacuees streaming, or being carried, from the Fickett were medically evaluated. Those who claimed no fire-related medical problems were not tagged and were speedily funneled into the school gymnasium where American Red Cross representatives set up an evacuation and relocation center.

Firefighter Benjamin Pinel of Engine 54 was killed when a flash-over occurred 36 minutes after a 4:54 a.m., December 4, 1984, alarm reported a fire in The Proud Bird restaurant near Los Angeles International Airport.

Patients with obvious or suspected smoke or other inhalation distress were tagged and assisted to the care-holding area. Paramedics operating many cardiac monitors assessed patients for medical problems, while remaining alert for delayed reactions to the trauma of the fire as well as flareups of preexisting ailments.

Incoming Rescue-Ambulances mostly arrived by one route and left by another with a firefighter driving and paramedics attending patients. Of the 68 patients tagged, 17 were transported to four area hospitals which had been on standby since the Medical Alert Center notification. All patients were soon released.

Firefighting continued concurrently. By now, the condo complex problem was winding down. It was, however, a long, tough fight as firefighters dug out pockets of fire in the apartments. Indicative of their efforts was a superb stop made among upper floor apartments as pre-heating reached the point of ignition, but never occurred. Damage to the condos and the Fickett was put at close to $1 million.

Chief Engineer Manning arrived at the fire well before Incident Commander Bennett declared a knockdown 71 minutes after the first alarm. Manning found that Bennett, the battalion chiefs, firefighters and paramedics had problems so well under control that there was no need for him to take command of the fire. Manning later told fire commissioners:

"In my view it was the finest operation I have ever seen, with all elements at a fire coming together in perfection. I'm talking about the people in the building being trained and doing what they were trained to do. I'm talking about the management of the fire; the individual actions by the firefighters and the paramedics and the ability to shift priorities. I'm talking about the emergency medical service. It was all, absolutely, in my view, as close to perfect as we are going to get."

Going on five months after the Fickett fire, another arson fire resulted in the death of a firefighter and posed severe firefighting problems. Shortly after midnight, December 4, 1984, burglars hauled away a large commercial refrigerator and a freezer from The Proud Bird restaurant, 11022 South Aviation Boulevard, immediately east of Los Angeles International Airport. Before leaving the large restaurant, the intruders set at least three fires, notably in three sofas in widely-scattered areas of the Proud Bird.

During the next hours, the fire spread into The Proud Bird's cavernous attic of around 225,000 cubic feet. The attic was compartmentalized by a labyrinth of wood and other flammables. About 4:50 a.m., Airport Police Officers Joe Ransfer and Robert Lopez, were on routine patrol when they saw flames piercing the roof and a fire inside the single-story restaurant.

OCD was immediately called and at 4:54 a.m., Task Forces 95 and 5, Engine 80 and Battalion 4 Chief Kenneth Brass answered the alarm. Recognizing the obviously heavy involvement of the 130-by-175 grand ballroom's attic, greater alarm calls brought 23 companies of firefighters and more chief officers, including Division 2 Assistant Chief Dave Parsons and Deputy Chief Don Anthony.

Trucks 5, 64, 66 and 95 laddered the roof and discovered an

FROM THE COLLECTION OF JOANNE CAMERON

Firefighter Johnny Garcia of Truck 64 entered the pitch black murk of the burning Proud Bird restaurant in three attempts to rescue Firefighter Benjamin Pinel, whose body was found later. Exhausted by his efforts, Garcia was aided by Firefighter Joanne Cameron of Task Force 64. Garcia was awarded the Medal of Valor for his attempts to rescue Pinel.

unusually difficult ventilation problem. The Proud Bird not only had a thick roof, but a 10-to-12-foot attic which had purposely been designed to soundproof the restaurant as commercial airline jets passed over the restaurant while landing at Los Angeles International Airport. Engine companies, meanwhile, laid hoselines into the ballroom area where firefighters saw sofas as well as dining room tables and chairs burning.

Even as they cut holes in the roof, truck company firefighters discovered their standard ventilation tactics were ineffective. The maze of ceiling and roof supports, segmented into 10 areas, provided many concealed spawning areas for the propagation of fire. As thick black smoke puffed from the ventilation cuts, firefighters used their longest pike poles in attempts to punch holes through the ceiling. Other firefighters, working with pike poles from the inside, tried to pull down the ceiling to gain access to the pockets of fire.

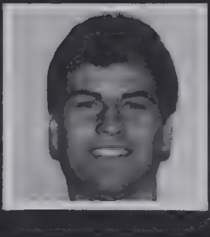
It quickly became evident that effective ventilation was virtually impossible and the ballroom area would have to be abandoned to the flames. The fire would burn through the roof and vent itself, at which time the firefighters would be forced to fall back to an exterior attack with heavy streams from aerial ladder pipes, wagon batteries and portable monitors.

Thirty-six minutes after the first alarm, firefighters were continuing to stubbornly battle to control the fire with an interior attack, coupled with roof ventilation. At 5:30 a.m., Capt. Jim N. DiGrado and Firefighters Walter T. Barnett and Benjamin Pinel of Engine 54 were advancing a one-and-one-half-inch hoseline into the ballroom. Nearby, Capt. Charles L. Mackie and Firefighters Isaac A. Burks and Randall J. Beach of Engine 66, were similarly stretching a line into the ballroom.

Pinel was advancing the nozzle and Barnett was pulling hose while Mackie cleared away furniture. A violent flashover fireballed across the entire ceiling of the mammoth ballroom and instantly created untenable heat and thick smoke conditions. Engine 66 firefighters fled as did DiGrado and Barnett of Engine 54. Outside, these burned and smoke-sickened firefighters discovered that Pinel had not escaped with them.

Firefighters immediately plunged into the vicious heat and thick black smoke to find Pinel. Among them was Firefighter Johnny Garcia of Truck 64. Garcia followed the hoseline to the nozzle, but Pinel was not there. Somewhere in the hot murk Garcia heard the low-air warning bell on Pinel's breathin apparatus and the sound of the personal alarm device on Pin el's turnout coat.

REQUIESCAT IN PACE



Firefighter Benjamin Pinel
Engine 54
Died of smoke inhalation at restaurant fire
December 4, 1984

When Garcia's air supply ran low, he hurried from th building, got a fresh bottle and again went in after Pinel. Thi time he heard only Pinel's personal alarm. Still Garcia coul not find him. Forced to go back for still another air bottle Garcia made a third attempt to find Pinel, but now hear nothing which could lead him to wherever Pinel had fallen.

The attic fire worsened as firefighters desperately searche for Pinel whose body was soon found about 75-feet from th nozzle. Pinel, 29, joined the LAFD on March 14, 1983, and wa survived by his wife, Carol, a six-month-old daughter, Nicole and a brother, Firefighter Michael Pinel of Task Force 66 Garcia was awarded the Medal of Valor for his attempts t rescue Pinel.

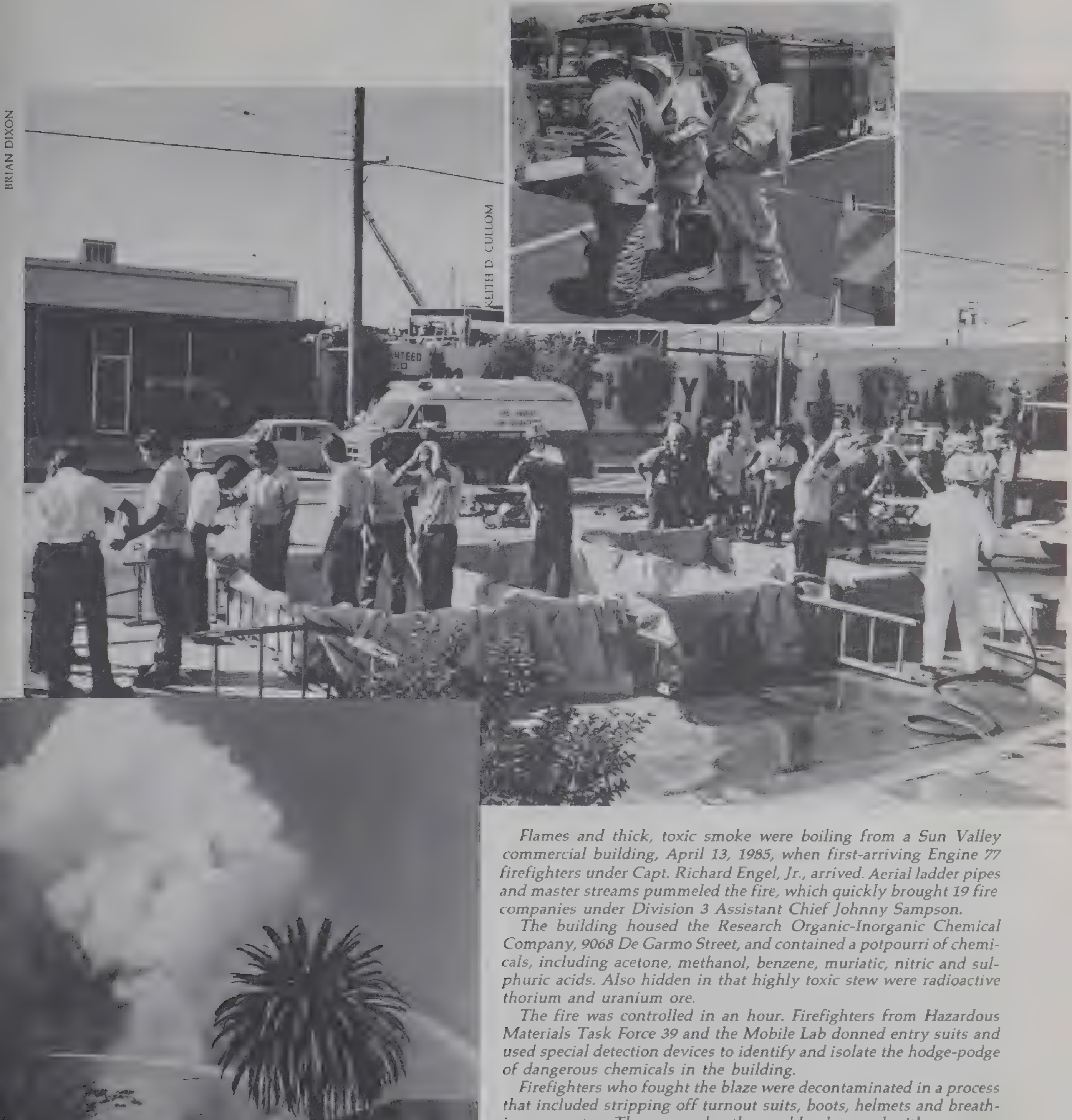
Arson investigators, aided by officers from the Bureau o Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms' arson task force, subsequentl arrested Jose Jesus Davilla, the only Proud Bird employe known to be in the restaurant at the time the fire started Davilla was subsequently released for lack of other than cir cumstantial evidence and the inadmissibility into evidence o his failure to pass a lie detector test. Because of his illega immigrant status, Davilla was deported to Mexico. The refrig erator and freezer were never found.

In February, 1985, ***Firehouse Magazine*** asked seven facult members of the National Fire Academy to develop criteria b which fire service excellence could be measured. Burton Clark head of the academy's organizational development progra and an expert on survey research techniques, used the faculty' yardsticks in developing a survey of some 25,000 fire departments in the United States.

Four months before the LAFD celebrated its 100th birthday ***Firehouse*** published the results in its October, 1985, "In Searc of Excellence" theme issue. The academy authorities develope a list of the 25 United States fire departments which wer leaders in excellence. The LAFD was among them. The department was, moreover, the only one chosen for an in-dept profile which appeared in the same issue. Written by ***Firehous*** Contributing Editor Paul Ditzel, the article said, in part:

"Of the many yardsticks used to measure excellence in a fir department, there is one that supersedes all others: How consistently effective a department is in fireground management multi-casualty emergency medical incidents, preparation fo hazardous materials problems, fire prevention, training, publi education and, most of all, giving taxpayers the most bang fo their budgetary buck.

"This consistent excellence derives from the synergistic effectiveness of innovative and interconnecting policies, programs and procedures, with the bottom line yielding superio results compared to the sum of the individual parts. Consisten excellence, innovation and synergistic effectiveness best en capsulates . . . the Los Angeles Fire Department."



BRIAN DIXON

KEITH D. CULLOM

KE MEADOWS/LOS ANGELES TIMES

Flames and thick, toxic smoke were boiling from a Sun Valley commercial building, April 13, 1985, when first-arriving Engine 77 firefighters under Capt. Richard Engel, Jr., arrived. Aerial ladder pipes and master streams pummeled the fire, which quickly brought 19 fire companies under Division 3 Assistant Chief Johnny Sampson.

The building housed the Research Organic-Inorganic Chemical Company, 9068 De Garmo Street, and contained a potpourri of chemicals, including acetone, methanol, benzene, muriatic, nitric and sulphuric acids. Also hidden in that highly toxic stew were radioactive thorium and uranium ore.

The fire was controlled in an hour. Firefighters from Hazardous Materials Task Force 39 and the Mobile Lab donned entry suits and used special detection devices to identify and isolate the hodge-podge of dangerous chemicals in the building.

Firefighters who fought the blaze were decontaminated in a process that included stripping off turnout suits, boots, helmets and breathing apparatus. They were also thoroughly showered with a concentrated detergent and then rinsed. Paramedics examined each firefighter for symptoms of poisoning.

A total of 56 firefighters who evidenced rises in blood pressure, nausea, skin irritations and sore throats were transported by rescue-Ambulances to six hospitals. All returned to duty.

The De Garmo Street fire would long be remembered for the impetus it gave to the passage of a Community Right To Know Law. All businesses handling toxic and other hazardous substances were required to provide a complete inventory of these materials to the LAFD by December 31, 1986. These chemical inventories were entered into a computer data base for use by firefighters and other emergency personnel. From this data base, emergency personnel thereafter would be able to quickly access information on dangers present and methods for coping with them.

As they celebrated the 100th birthday of the LAFD, Task Force 1 firefighters recalled memorable fires, including the August 8, 1984, Leo Bortz Oil Company warehouse fire during the Olympic Games in Los Angeles.

MIKE MEADOWS/LOS ANGELES TIMES

EPILOGUE

A CENTURY OF SERVICE

As far as Task Force Commander Jim Kinninger and th nine other firefighters and two paramedics at Fire Station 1 were concerned, Saturday, February 1, 1986, was with one notable exception, likely to be just another routin day. What made this day special was their realization that i marked the completion of the first century of service by th Los Angeles Fire Department and the start of the second.

Exactly 100 years ago, the LAFD went into service with fou stations, two 750-gallon-per-minute steam-powered fire engines, each with an accompanying two-wheel hose reel rig, 65-foot aerial ladder truck, a hose wagon and 11 horses. The 3 paid firefighters were augmented by 24 reserve callmen swor to provide fire protection in the rapidly-growing city of 3 square miles and a population approaching 50,000.

On duty 100 years to the day later, were 776 of the city's 270 firefighters and 104 of the department's 341 paramedics. The were assigned to the LAFD's 103 stations, including 46 tas forces (an aerial ladder and two engines), 52 single-piece engin companies, 47 paramedic rescue-ambulances, five fireboat and six helicopters. A century after it went into service, th LAFD was protecting a city of more than 3 million population a city with an assessed valuation of $94.7 billion and a city c 467 square miles.

Fire Station 1's first alarm district in the Lincoln Height area of the city, northeast of the downtown Civic Cente covers 3.35 of those square miles. The protection problems i that area are wide-ranging and include light manufacturin and residential districts, railroad yards, portions of the Pasadena and Golden State Freeways and grassy hillsides.

The LAFD's 100th birthday held special significance for Fi Station 1's firefighters and paramedics. They could trace thei station's history to 1871, when Los Angeles' volunteer firefighters opened the city's first firehouse; an adobe buildin adjacent to the old City Hall on the west side of Spring Stre between Franklin (Court) and Temple Streets. The voluntee disbanded three years later after the City Council refused t provide horses to pull the steam fire engine to alarms.

Fire Station 1 was quickly reborn, April 11, 1874, whe volunteers calling themselves Thirty-Eights Engine Company 1, because there were 38 founding members, reactivated the company. Ten years later they moved into a new firehouse leased by the city at 26 Plaza Street in the city's Old Plaza district.

When the paid LAFD went in service in 1886, the Plaza Station regained the Station 1 name. As the city grew and the Old Plaza station outlived its usefulness, a new Fire Station 1 was built in 1888 at 1901 Pasadena Avenue. That station was replaced by the fourth LAFD firehouse to bear the name, Fire Station 1, when it opened at its present location, 2230 Pasadena Avenue, in 1941.

As did their counterparts 100 years earlier, Fire Station 1's personnel reported for duty early. Like all uniformed members of the department, they had been issued special centennial celebration badges designed by Capt. Dean E. Lange of Fire Station 109. The badge would be worn throughout the centennial year.

LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT
CENTENNIAL
FIREFIGHTER
109

LAFD PHOTO

LAFD members wore special centennial celebration badges designed by Capt. Dean E. Lange of Fire Station 109. The badge was worn throughout the centennial year.

Among the first to arrive was Engineer Ted Smith. He started a fresh pot of coffee and began checking the lights, equipment, fuel, oil and water levels of Engine 201, a 1967 Crown 1250-gallon-per-minute triple combination pumper. Smith was soon joined by Engineer Bob Crook, who similarly serviced Engine 1, a 1961 Crown of similar size and pumping capacity. Nearby, Apparatus Operator Richard Hernandez was checking out Truck 1, a 1962 Seagrave 100-foot aerial ladder.

Also among the early arrivals was Paramedic Linda B. Eddie, who was making certain that Rescue-Ambulance 1, a 1981 GMC, was stocked with medical supplies and that the ambulance was mechanically ready for today's calls. Her partner, Paramedic Bob Miller, was, meanwhile, entering emergency medical response and service data into a computer on the second floor of the two story reinforced concrete firehouse. Not far away, Task Force Commander Kinninger and Capt. Tom Barbre were completing reports which, like the paramedics' data, would similarly be transmitted to headquarters.

The 8 a.m. lineup of firefighters and paramedics officially signified that the A Platoon of Fire Station 1 was on duty: Task Force Commander Kinninger was assigned to the truck as was Apparatus Operator Hernandez and Firefighters Douglas Bayer, Earl Wyatt and Tillerman Ruben De La Rosa. Crewing the two engines — the balance of the task force — were Captain Barbre, Engineers Crook and Smith, as well as Firefighters James Carter and Tony Morga, who today, is the station's cook. He will prepare a lunch of Mexican food. Soon to arrive is a white-frosted cake decorated with the greeting, "Happy 100th Birthday. LAFD Fire Station 1."

Routine activities were proceeding at Fire Station 1 in much the same manner as they were 100 years ago this morning, while firefighters and paramedics remained alert for their expected daily average of about a dozen emergency medical service calls and half as many fire alarms. A century ago, Los Angeles' fire alarms were mostly sounded by three pistol shots, the firing of blunderbusses and the ringing of bells.

Now, alarms first come into the Operations Control Dispatch Section (OCD) in the basement of City Hall East. During each 24-hour shift, there are 16 dispatchers, three captains and a battalion chief. Alarms are transmitted to Fire Station 1 and other LAFD stations, starting with a tone alert, a public address and radio system which broadcasts those companies due to respond, the type of incident, location and the time of the alarm. This information is simultaneously printed on the firehouse teletype.

During these 24 hours marking the date of the completion of the LAFD's first century of service, OCD will transmit 695 alarms: 145 for fires and 550 for emergency medical service. Fire Station 1 firefighters will answer five of those fire alarms, including a 3:26 a.m., call to 3016 Manitou Avenue. Captain Barbre will radio OCD while en route that Task Force 1 firefighters can see the fire's loomup.

The fire, starting suspiciously in a carport of a two-story apartment building, will require a call by Task Force Commander Kinninger for additional apparatus — Task Force 47 — as flames threaten to spread into the apartments above. Firefighter Morga will suffer a back injury while fighting the fire which, despite heavy smoke and fire conditions, is knocked down in only 10 minutes, with a loss of $5000.

Rescue-Ambulance 1 Paramedics Eddie and Miller will themselves answer 10 alarms, including calls to victims of strokes, a youngster injured in a fall from a bicycle, a victim of a scalding, an epileptic seizure and, at 11:44 p.m., respond to 3825 Portola Avenue. There, they will find a 35-year-old man shot in the chest during a holdup in a bar. After stabilizing their patient, the paramedics will rush him to the Los Angeles County/USC Trauma Center where he will recover. "It was a slow Saturday," said Miller.

This day's nearly 700 alarms throughout the city sharply contrast to the early experience of LAFD firefighters who would wait for days and sometimes weeks without answering an alarm. In 1886, the LAFD's first day of service was unusually busy as Fire Station 1 answered two alarms: one for a brush fire near 1100 North Mission Boulevard and an early-morning fire in the Grand Central Hotel, 224 North Main Street.

At 8:06 a.m., while Fire Station 1 firefighters and paramedics are taking a coffee break in the kitchen, four staccato-like bells sound and the teletype machine begins to clatter as do those in every firehouse in the city:

Special Notice *. . . I hereby proclaim February 1, 1986, as the* *official date of celebration and dedication of "A Century of Service" . . . As we celebrate 100 years of service in this centennial year, let each of us take a moment to reflect on the dedication and professionalism of those members who served before us . . . It is with great pride and sincere appreciation that I salute each member of this department in sharing the reputation of being the most progressive fire department in the world and celebrate on this occasion, our "100th birthday".*

The message is from Donald O. Manning, chief engineer and general manager of the LAFD.

The teletype message prompts recollections among Fire Station 1's firefighters and paramedics. The most recent of them was the Leo Bortz Oil Company warehouse fire at 1746 North Spring Street on the night of August 8, 1984, during the Olympic Games.

Task Force 1 firefighters saw the loomup en route after the 8:52 p.m., alarm. Arriving, they found an 80-by-100-foot metal clad warehouse completely involved. Feeding the flames were 55,000 gallons of flammable liquids. That first alarm quickly turned into a major emergency fire calling out 13 task forces, two single-piece engine companies, a squad, two foam-carrying rigs, plus four paramedic rescue-ambulances under Incident Commander Frank Borden, Division 1 assistant chief and, later, Deputy Chief Don Anthony. Paramedics treated 34 firefighters for burns, which were mostly caused by flammable liquids and chemicals floating on the water used to battle the fire.

This day marking the end of the first century of service for the LAFD prompted speculation about what lay ahead for the department during the second 100 years. Surely, there would be as yet unheard of innovations in a department acclaimed as an innovator. Was it too crystal-ballish to suggest the possibility that satellites could one day spot fires — perhaps by infrared detectors — and sound alarms? Perhaps satellites would replace the telephone, just as the telephone had replaced fire alarm boxes which themselves replaced pistol shots, blunderbusses and bells for sounding alarms. The idea did not seem far-fetched, considering that satellites have already shown their capability for detecting forest fires.

Would robotized apparatus strip away some of the dangers of firefighting so long as men and women firefighters had to enter burning buildings and, at the risk of their lives, make rescues and personally carry the attack directly to the fire? That idea did not seem preposterous, either, considering that robotized firefighting and rescue apparatus already exists.

Osaka, Japan, firefighters, for example, have a six-wheel Jeep-sized rescue rig with two protruding sensors that resemble insect feelers. The sensors project images on the dashboard oscilloscope to warn of obstructions ahead. Driven into fires by firefighters in full protective clothing and breathing equipment, the apparatus has extra seats for victims who are rescued. Attached to each seat is breathing apparatus for victims of smoke inhalation. Further demonstrating that the LAFD has no monopoly on innovative ideas is the fact that the Chicago and Scottsdale, Arizona, firefighters, among others, have experimented with robotized apparatus.

Considering that, in 1986, the average time on the job for a member of the LAFD with the rank of firefighter was only about eight years, the department's history was understandably unfamiliar to most of them. Few, if any, of the firefighters and paramedics at Fire Station 1 had ever heard of, or knew much about, some of Los Angeles' historic fires: the Belmont and Van Nuys Hotel fires . . . The Sylmar tunnel catastrophe . . . The O'Connor Electroplating, the *S.S. Markay* and the ***Los Angeles Times*** explosions and fires . . . The Bel-Air-Brentwood brush fire conflagration . . . The Griffith Park holocaust . . . The major loss of life fires in the St. George, Stratford and Ponet Square apartment hotels.

Extremely difficult firefighting, ventilation and salvage demands during the April 29, 1986, Central Library fire required 60 companies, one of the largest commitments of firefighting resources to a structure fire in the history of the LAFD.

Fire Station 1 firefighters and paramedics could, as they finished their coffee break, only wonder what future fires would significantly etch themselves into LAFD history during the department's second century of service. Little could two of Fire Station 1's firefighters in that kitchen — Task Force Commander Kinninger and Apparatus Operator Hernandez — possibly know what awaited them only 12 weeks later. While working a C Platoon day, they would be among some 350 firefighters and paramedics called to a fire which would forever rank among the most memorable in LAFD annals.

There are, in every firefighter's years of service before retirement, only a few fires which stand out as "career fires" because of their extraordinary nature: severely life-threatening, hot, smoky and posing unparalleled challenges. The fire in Los Angeles' Central Library, 630 West Fifth Street in downtown Los Angeles, would, by every yardstick, qualify as a career fire.

Built in 1926, the three-story Central Library with its 54-foot rotunda, was based upon the 1893 design of the Library of Congress. The Central Library had not only become one of Los Angeles' cultural treasures, but was acknowledged to be among the nation's foremost repositories of books, newspapers, magazines, art, photos, recordings and patents.

A treasure chest of early Los Angeles history, the Central Library's collections were extensively used during research for ***A Century of Service,*** the centennial history of the LAFD, published by the Los Angeles Firemen's Relief Association. Fortunately, that research was completed before the fire which is believed to have destroyed some of the one-of-a-kind source material used in the book.

While much of the Central Library's collection was as priceess as it was irreplaceable, those riches were poorly safeguarded against fire. Prior to 1956, Chief Engineer John H. Alderson warned city councilmen and others of the strong probability of a catastrophic fire in the library. Along with other authorities, Alderson believed that the inevitable result of a major fire in the library would be a total burnout.

Because of the library's construction and its honeycomb of narrow aisles, limited access and almost total lack of built-in horizontal and vertical fire barriers, interior attack would be impossible in those days before all LAFD firefighters were equipped with breathing apparatus. Even with breathers, the dangers lurking inside the Central Library's maze would almost certainly cost the lives of many firefighters who could easily become disoriented and lost in the smoke.

From the outside, the Central Library hardly looked like it was built to burn. As architecturally symbolic as it was of Los Angeles half-a-century ago, the Central Library had become one of the city's best-known historic landmarks. Cherished by preservationists, the library was inadvertently built to keep a fire inside and firefighters outside.

The Central Library's fortress-like walls were of 16-inch-thick concrete with reinforcing steelwork. The six-inch thick roof and floors were similarly constructed. The rotunda roof was a three-foot-thick concrete and steel dome. The thick roof and floors and almost total absence of windows where they would most be needed in event of a fire, would defy conventional heat and smoke ventilation procedures.

Worse than that were the four interconnected firetraps cocooned in the library. Located near the four corners of the 334-by-200-foot building, they housed the book storage areas known as stacks and were the most vulnerable areas in the library to fire. Each 49-by-43-foot stack extended from the basement up through seven tiers of book shelf areas. They were jampacked, floor-to-ceiling, with books and similar combustibles. The tiers were supported by unprotected steel columns and beams.

Capt. Tony DiDomenico of the public service unit examines some of the damage in the northeast stacks of the Central Library. Of more than one million books in the library, only 350,000 were damaged.

The library's third floor provided a six-inch thick concrete and steel lid over the stacks. The interior traffic patterns in the library often confused its patrons and sometimes its staff. Access to the stacks — off-limits to the public — was limited and only then by narrow doorways.

The stacks were a labyrinth of 30-inch-wide aisles and three-foot-wide stairways which, without fire doors or other barriers, would quickly spread flames and smoke vertically and horizontally. These areas were purposely built that way in those days when the myth of the fireproof building was in its heyday among architects and builders. They took professional pride in the design and construction of the stacks which were considered not only unique, but economical and utilitarian. The basement through seventh tier gridwork of flues provided a natural and cheap method of air circulation. The designers did not realize they were also creating four chimneys and capping each of them with a stout cover.

Bad as conditions were when Alderson first warned of them, they were treacherously worse in 1986 as the library's collections filled the stacks to capacity and spilled over into public reading rooms and other areas.

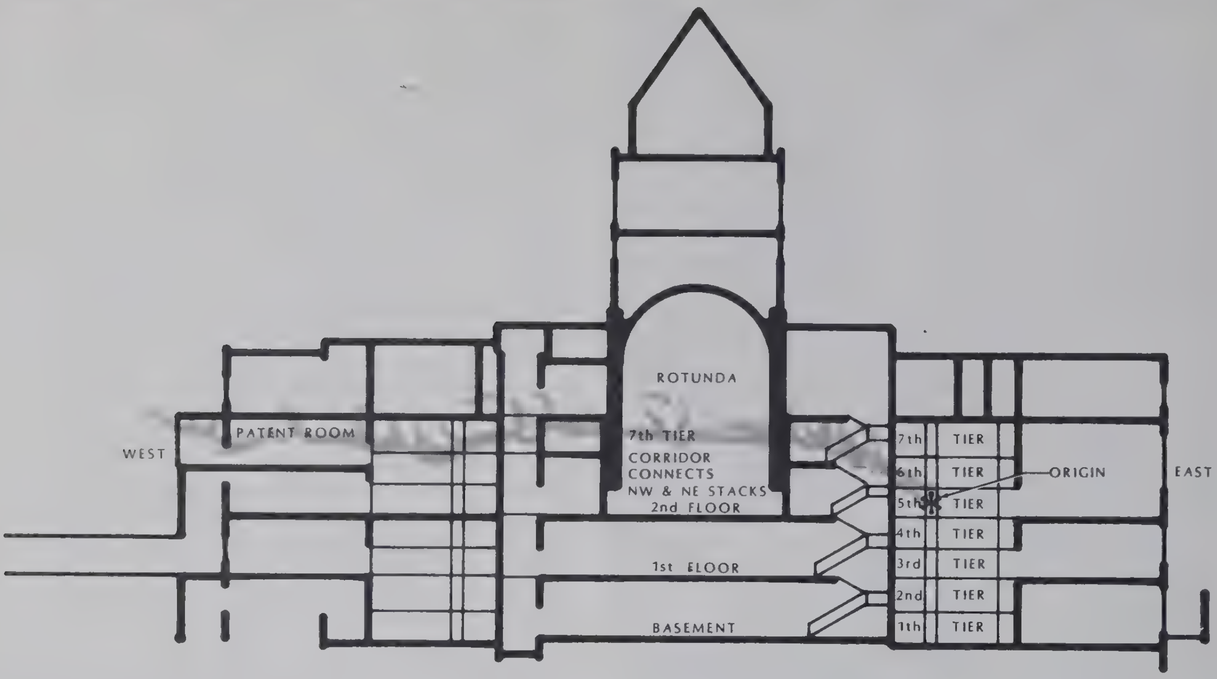
The Central Library's collections — including 1.2 million books — had, for years, demonstrated the need for a larger building. Battalion 3 Chief Ken Dameron later determined that fireloading in the stacks was 93 pounds of flammables per square foot. (By contrast, fireloading in Chicago's McCormick Place, the world's largest convention center, was around 25 pounds when that fire-resistant structure was destroyed, January 16, 1967, with losses of $22.5 million in the nation's worst fire in that type occupancy.)

While solutions to the library's problems were debated and city officials procrastinated over the years, the LAFD convinced authorities to make at least some attempts at better built-in fire safety. There was, of course, an existing standpipe water system and basement sprinklers. Full sprinklerization in the stacks was not a viable option, given the potentially destructive effect of even one accidentally-triggered sprinkler head. The LAFD did, however, convince city officials to install a smoke detector and alarm system in the hope that early detection and notification, would, with luck, give the LAFD a fighting chance when the inevitable major fire occurred.

Shortly before 11 o'clock that Tuesday morning, April 29, 1986, an arsonist touched off a fire on the fifth tier of the northeast stacks. At 10:52 a.m., an OCD dispatcher received a call from a Central Library switchboard operator who said smoke detector bells were ringing. False alarms were fairly regular from the library, but OCD nevertheless dispatched Task Forces 3 and 9, Engine 10, Squad 4 and Battalion 1 Chief Don Cate.

First-arriving firefighters saw neither smoke nor fire. The 400 library workers and patrons were, as fire pre-planning dictated, evacuating the building with the assistance of security officers. Guards met firefighters at the Fifth Street entrance and said they knew of no fire and that nobody in the building had reported any. Firefighters therefore had reason to believe this was another false alarm. While first-in companies entered the building to make certain there was no fire and to reset the smoke detectors, other companies were radio-directed to return to their quarters.

Guards accompanied firefighters to the master annunciator panel in the basement. The panel indicated that the first smoke detector to activate was on the sixth tier of the northeast stack. Two other detectors subsequently registered smoke on the stack's fifth tier. When they were unable to reset the detectors, firefighters headed for the northeast stack. With the alarm panel in the west basement and the reported fire five or six



Fire, started by an arsonist in the fifth tier of the northeast stacks of the Central Library, spread upward and horizontally along a corridor to invade the northwest stacks and the Patent Room. The Central Library fire was to become probably the most difficult to fight and dangerous structure fire in the modern day department. Illustration by Sammie Spain of the Maps and Drafting Unit, LAFD.

tiers above them and at the opposite end of the library, minutes were unavoidably lost as firefighters made their way up and through the circuitous stairs and corridors.

Firefighters first encountered smoke in the second floor Fiction Department and heavier smoke just inside the department's door leading to the fifth tier stack. A handie-talkie radio call for help was effectively blocked by the library's thick walls. Firefighters sought a telephone to call OCD. Almost simultaneously, firefighters standing by outside saw light gray smoke begin to ooze from the east roof and immediately radioed OCD. Dispatchers not only ordered the returning first alarm companies to go back to the library, but wisely beefed-up the assignment by adding two engines to the response.

Eighteen minutes after the initial alarm, Cate radioed for four additional task forces and thus set in motion the start of one of the largest commitments of firefighting resources to a structure fire in the history of the LAFD: 60 fire companies, including 21 task forces, 23 single-piece engines, nine paramedic rescue-ambulances, three helicopters, two emergency air units to provide and resupply breathing apparatus bottles, Heavy Utility 27 and nearly 350 firefighters: almost half of the on-duty firefighters in the city. The Central Library fire was to become probably the most difficult to fight and dangerous structure fire in the modern day history of the LAFD.

Among the officers answering the early alarms was Deputy Chief Don Anthony, commander of the bureau of fire suppression and rescue. Anthony realized that protecting the library's collections from water would be as integral a part of the battle as firefighting and ventilation. While en route, the deputy chief radioed for fully-manned salvage companies. As incident commander, he was first sent Salvages 54, 59 and 78. Salvage 25 soon thereafter responded.

Aerial ladders were raised as firefighters climbed to the roof to attempt what little ventilation they could, while others hauled hoses up to and inside windows. Engine companies supplied water to the standpipe system as firefighters with hosepacks and breathing apparatus converged upon the upper tiers of the northeast stack and connected their lines to standpipe outlets.

Shortly after Anthony's arrival came the first tipoff of the ordeal that was to be the firefighters' lot during the next seemingly endless hours. Fire and smoke, rapidly spearing upwards from the fifth tier, heavily-involved Tiers 6 and 7. Two things occurred when the heat and smoke reached the underside of the six-inch-thick third floor: The floor began soaking up heat like a blotter and forced the rapidly growing smoke to bank down through tiers leading to the basement. Visibility in that hot murk became like a thick fog bank.

Limited accessibility to the involved stack — only four narrow stairways and one window — further compounded problems. Groping their way into the stacks, firefighters were confronted by still another treachery: the narrow aisles and stairways made it extremely difficult for them to battle their way inside and, advancing inch-by-inch, foot-by-foot, bend their fully-charged and balky hoselines around corners. The library's thick walls, moreover, soaked up still more heat as the northeast stack became an oven.

Cone-like sprays from nozzles turned to steam which seared firefighters in that wilderness of smoke and fire. Loaded down with their heavy protective clothing and breathing apparatus, firefighters stubbornly bored into the rapidly-escalating fire. Runoff water bubbled as it came to a boil on the flooring. Steel bookshelves soon added to the hell that was inside the stacks as they glowed cherry red. Burning books tumbled in front of, around and behind firefighters. If they had been forced to make a fast retreat they could never have followed their hoselines which were buried under the debris. Soon, too, came the first ominous sounds of low-air warning bells ringing on the firefighters' breathing apparatus.

Only then did the firefighters retreat to obtain fresh bottles as they were relieved by other attack teams who took their place. And so began the rotation of fire attack teams which would continue throughout the afternoon. The ferocious heat required backup teams which cooled the front-line firefighters with cooling sprays from one-and-one-half-inch lines until it became their turn to relieve those on the forefront of the various attack points.

No less punishment and danger challenged other firefighters working in the uninvolved tiers below as salvage efforts proceeded concurrently. Firefighters spread salvage covers and rolls of plastic while others dumped dozens of bags of sawdust which not only soaked up water but was formed into dikes to channel water from the building. Even as they labored, firefighters engaged in salvage operations were taking their own beating from the unyielding and steadily rising heat as they sweated under a shower of hot runoff water and burning debris cascading down upon them.

At 11:45 a.m., Chief Paramedic Jon Fasana arrived and designated Alan R. Cowen, assistant emergency medical services bureau commander, as head of EMS operations. A medical command post was set up just inside an underground garage near the northeast corner of Fifth and Flower Streets. Cowen would coordinate all emergency medical activities, including triaging and staging of ambulances. The first three casualties were brought to the medical command post only 12 minutes later. Following treatment for steam burns, Engineer Fred Haarman of Engine 10 and Firefighters Christopher Logan of Engine 6 and Jose A. Olivas of Task Force 4 were transported by Rescue-Ambulance 3 to County/USC Hospital.

While more attack and salvage teams were formed from among incoming companies answering the greater alarm calls for help, battlelines were set up to bar the extension of the fire into the southeast stacks. Even as firefighters had growing cause for optimism in that sector, the fire evidenced that it was gnawing into a Tier 7 corridor that would provide a path for the fire directly under the third floor and into the northwest stacks. Firefighters, meanwhile, continued to press forward with the battle as best they could: falling back in some areas before the withering onslaught of the heat and crawling a few feet forward in others, as the firefight seesawed into and past the noon hour.

Smoke and heat worsened as effective ventilation efforts were thwarted by the building's thick walls, flooring and roof. Temperatures inside the furnace that was the Central Library's northeast stack soared to, reached and surpassed 2000 degrees Fahrenheit. Although firefighters' breathing apparatus air bottles were rated as being capable of supplying up to one hour of air, warning bells were sounding in around 10 minutes; one more indication of the exertions of firefighters and the demands they were making upon their breathers.

As fire, smoke and incredible heat were bottled up inside the northeast stack, firefighters continued to suffer steam burns and, additionally, heat exhaustion and dehydration as the hours dragged on. Attack teams were rotated as often as every 10 minutes and this rotation continued for seemingly endless hours.

Firefighters were beginning to sense wisps of optimism that the fire in the northeast stacks would soon concede defeat when the situation suddenly turned sour. As firefighters earlier feared it might, the fire made its major and fastest move of the battle as it raced along the seventh tier corridor and invaded Tiers 6 and 7 of the northwest stack. Not content to stop there, the fire continued its rampage into the Patent Room, repository of some of the most valuable documents in the library. Completing its horizontal thrust along a 300-foot front, the fire, after mostly burning out of sight of those outside the building, suddenly burst from windows on the western side of the library about two hours after the first alarm.

Incident Commander Anthony had steadfastly hoped that a master stream attack from the outside would not be necessary because of the potentially disastrous loss of books those deluges would cause. Anthony's hope was dashed with the full involvement of the Patent Room and the almost certain threat of probable extension of the fire along the west interior of the building and into the southwest stacks. Engine 29 set up its wagon battery, while Task Force 75 firefighters raised their aerial ladder and edged the ladder pipe close to the flame-belching windows. Within minutes, the wagon battery and aerial ladder pipe streams were boring into the flames and, alternating with the ongoing interior attack, rekindled hope that the fire would soon be checkmated.

Early that afternoon, hours into the fire, the ventilation problem was as severe as ever. The heat buildup inside the northeast and northwest stacks and especially along the stoutly-built corridor, was believed to have reached as much as 2500 degrees Fahrenheit. Assistant Chief Pete Lucarelli, taking command of ventilation operations, ordered Heavy Utility 27's jackhammer to the third floor. Lucarelli's strategy was to breach a series of holes through the six-inch-thick third floor directly over the fire, insert cellar nozzles and hopefully solve the heat and smoke ventilation problem.

Even as these unorthodox ventilation tactics were underway, Tiers 6 and 7 of the northwest stack collapsed and created still more perils for firefighters, especially those spreading salvage covers and draping protective plastic sheeting over tiers below.

Firefighters jackhammering 18 holes were themselves assaulted by the pressurized heat and smoke gushing from the openings. Although they were in full protective gear, including breathing apparatus and ear muffs, they had to be cooled by other hose sprays. After sponging heat for so many hours, the thick floor on which they stood itself caused runoff water to boil and bubble. The ventilation-by-jackhammering would continue for hours and ultimately prove effective as gasoline-powered blowers directed smoke out windows.

Still the fire feinted and jabbed as it refused to be knocked down by the combined assault of team after team of rotated firefighters. We can understand why those firefighters first went into that maelstrom of heat and smoke and that crazy-quilt gridwork of narrow aisles and stairways. But what manner of uncommon valor possessed them to go back in time after time after time when they knew not only what awaited them, but how lucky they had been to get out alive during previous rotations?

With so much of the LAFD's fire suppression resources committed to the fire, there was worry that another major fire would occur in the city. The LAFD accepted the Los Angeles County Fire Department's offer of help. At 1:45 p.m., six county engine companies moved into Fire Stations 3, 13, 25, 29, 33 and 65. The county firefighters were later relieved by fire prevention bureau inspectors with LAFD reserve apparatus.

The battle inside the library continued as firefighters reported slow but steady progress while the thick walls continued to soak up heat. Shortly after 4:30 p.m., more than five hours after the fire started, came the first good news of the day: the fire in the northeast stacks was controlled. After an unyielding attack, firefighters stopped extension into the southwest stacks with the loss of only a few rows of books on Tiers 6 and 7.

At 5 o'clock, firefighters who were taking as fierce a beating in the northwest stacks as those in the northeast, reported they had knocked down that fire. Hours of exhausting work remained as firefighters rooted out hotspots — a job that would continue for five days, which was about as long as it took the thick walls and flooring of the solidly-built library to cool down.

Never in the modern-day structural firefighting history of the Los Angeles Fire Department had so many firefighters worked so hard and for so long . . . suffered so much heat and smoke punishment . . . under conditions so dangerous that they virtually guaranteed the loss of many of their lives . . . and yet saved so much. Only those who were inside that inferno and shared their long ordeal could fully comprehend the determination and courage which led to the unparalleled victory over one of the worst structure fires in the history of Los Angeles. What they did and how they did it will be told and retold for as long as there is a Los Angeles Fire Department.

We cannot, therefore, diminish what those 350 firefighters achieved by speaking of the damage caused by this long-anticipated fire. To comprehend their accomplishments we must delineate what they saved: Of more than one million books in the library, only 350,000 were fire or water-damaged. Of the Central Library's $50 million structural value, only 4 percent was lost.

Because of the similarities between the Library of Congress and the Central Library, an official came from the nation's capital to see for himself what was accomplished. He concluded that if a similar fire occurred in the Library of Congress, it would take a minimum of 70 hours to control and would result in a catastrophic loss to the nation. By contrast, Los Angeles firefighters controlled the Central Library fire in only seven hours and 38 minutes.

How did they do it? By sheer determination, bulldog tenacity, discipline, training and physical fitness; all of which have marked the course of the LAFD during its entire first 100 years. And they did it without the loss of a single firefighter's life; totally contrary to years of speculative fears. Which is not to say that the fire did not exact a toll:

Fifty firefighters suffered injuries ranging from first and second degree burns on their necks and ears to smoke inhalation and heat exhaustion. Two firefighters — Richard L. Ousley of Engine 15 and Ernesto J. Navarro of Engine 76 — were taken by LAFD air ambulance paramedics to Sherman Oaks Community Hospital and to Long Beach Memorial Hospital, where they were placed in hyperbaric chambers where they recovered from the effects of carbon monoxide poisoning.

The incredibly low losses and minimum number of casualties at the Central Library fire bespeaks what will always stand as one of the most brilliantly executed firefighting, salvage, ventilation and paramedic tactical operations in the history of the LAFD. Further evidence of how those firefighters accomplished the seemingly impossible is perhaps best illustrated by the number of breathing apparatus air bottles required. Nearly 1400 filled and refilled bottles were used: itself a record which will undoubtedly long stand.

Phenomenal, too, was the effectiveness of firefighters' salvage work, considering the problems that existed before the fire, the deep-seated and long duration of fireground operations and, most of all, the fact that more than 3 million gallons of water were used to extinguish and overhaul the fire.

The explanation for the amazing save among the library's collections lies in what will go down as a salvage operation without equal in the department's history. More than 13,440 square feet of salvage covers were spread, plus 98 rolls of plastic covering. The plastic alone was sufficient to cover an area of more than two square acres. Around 100 bags of sawdust, as well as syphon pumps, were used to remove water from the building to further keep damage low and savings high.

That book losses and other portions of the Central Library's vast collections were held to an incredibly low figure is further attested to by the large number of library workers and civilian volunteers who later devoted countless hours to book salvaging and preservation efforts.

The LAFD's monumental achievement did not go unrecognized by community leaders. While the LAFD was in the midst of its year-long celebration of its first century of service, Harriet Newton, president of the Librarians' Guild, said the organization was planning a unique tribute to those who saved the library and its collections. When the library is rebuilt the organization plans to mount a plaque inscribed with the names of the 350 firefighters who jeopardized their lives while relentlessly refusing to surrender some of Los Angeles' richest cultural treasures to fire.

Considering the widely-acclaimed save of one of the city's best-known historic landmarks, which most people were ready to write off as a total burnout in event of a fire, the LAFD could pridefully consider itself ready for what may come during its second century of service.

Proud, too, would have been Billy Buffum, whose life is chronicled in the Central Library's renowned California Room collection which was saved by firefighters. For it was Billy Buffum who encouraged the formation of a fire department in the city. And it was in his elite saloon — where the Federal Courthouse stands today on Main Street — that the Los Angeles Fire Department got its start and where a fire service saga of excellence began a century ago.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul Ditzel, author of ***A Century of Service*** and editor of the ***LAFD Centennial 1886-1986***, has written 12 other books on a variety of subjects. His best selling 1976 book, ***Fire Engines, Firefighters***, was submitted by his publisher for a Pulitzer Prize in American History. Ditzel's 1977 book, ***Railroad Yard***, won The Bowker Award. His only other book focusing upon the LAFD was ***Emergency Ambulance***, published in 1972.

Ditzel, a former newspaper and wire service reporter and columnist, has written more than 600 magazine articles which have appeared in national publications. He was a contributing editor and columnist for ***Fire Engineering*** and currently is a contributing editor of ***Firehouse Magazine.*** His articles have won many awards and have been reprinted in ***The Reader's Digest*** and other magazines.

Ditzel holds both a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Science Degree in Journalism from Northwestern University where he graduated with highest scholastic honors.

Closely associated with the LAFD for more than 36 years, Ditzel was appointed as the LAFD's first civilian fire inspector by Chief Engineer Raymond M. Hill on March [illegible] 1967.

Ditzel has formed numerous citizens advisory committees to assist the LAFD and has participated in many programs and ballot initiatives beneficial to firefighters and their families. Ditzel recently served as chairman of Mayor Tom Bradley's Arson Task Force public awareness committee.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Past and present members of the Los Angeles Fire Department have, for many years, recognized the need for a history of the LAFD and its predecessor, the Los Angeles Volunteer Fire Department.

The history of fire protection in Los Angeles profoundly impacted the safety, phenomenal growth, economy, social, political, legislative and commercial story of Los Angeles and the area around it. One of the last major American cities to have a paid fire department, the LAFD became a bellwether for excellence in the worldwide fire service. Los Angeles Fire Department procedures and innovations have long been adopted throughout the United States and the world.

As early as 1952, Chief Engineer John H. Alderson encouraged me to write a history of the LAFD. Later, Chief Engineer John C. Gerard and others revived the idea and further heightened my interest. The history of the LAFD probably would have remained only an idea, except for the vision and foresight of William A. Burnidge, 1984-1985 president of the Los Angeles Firemen's Relief Association. Burnidge, sensing the timeliness of a book telling the history of fire protection in Los Angeles while the LAFD was celebrating its first century of service, won the approval of the Relief Association Board of Trustees to sponsor this book.

I am deeply appreciative, therefore, of the support of Walter Somaduroff, 1985-86 president of the Relief Association and the Board of Trustees for their encouragement.

I similarly appreciate the many months of work by Vince Marzo, LAFD public information officer, who, as managing editor, assisted me in countless ways.

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My endeavors were greatly facilitated, moreover, by my two chief research assistants, Paul Blum and Bill Dahlquist. No task was too large or too menial for them to enthusiastically volunteer to do as they gave so freely of their off-duty time.

I am grateful, too, to members of the LAFD Centennial Book Review Committee, who read the manuscript and made many suggestions. Lest the reader infer that a review committee suggests censorship, I am compelled to emphasize that the committee's chosen role was not censorial in any way whatsoever. Their observations were invaluable to me as was their ongoing encouragement. My deep gratitude, therefore, to committee members: Richard Baker, chairman; William A. Burnidge, Peter R. Lucarelli, Vince Marzo and Jim Perry.

The Los Angeles Fire Department Historical Society members also read the manuscript and made many worthwhile suggestions which were incorporated into the manuscript: Don Dodd, chairman; Paul Blum, vice chairman; and members Larry Arnold, Bill Dahlquist, Harry Morck, Hal Roberts, Mort Schuman, and Jack Simmons.

I must particularly note the assistance of Mort Schuman and Larry Arnold, whose profound knowledge of LAFD apparatus during the department's history was especially helpful, both in the narrative and in photo identification. And I owe a special note of thanks to Larry Schneider who read the manuscript and shared his deep knowledge of the history of the LAFD.

The LAFD story could not be told without reference to the history of Los Angeles, and to a large extent, national and international events which impacted the department. Unfortunately, there is no single definitive history of the city of Los Angeles. Compounding that problem was the fact that considerable amount of the LAFD's historical records and photos have been lost, discarded, or simply borrowed and never returned over the course of the department's history.

Two sources were, however, of extraordinary value as leads to historical material: *Sixty Years in Southern California, 1853-1913, Containing the Reminiscences of Harris Newmark,* fourth edition, published in 1984 by Dawson's Book Shop, Los Angeles. Also serving as a major springboard to more detailed information was Paul Revere Clark's *History of Fire Department,* which ran in consecutive issues of *The Grape Vine,* starting with the November 30, 1935 issue.

Details of American volunteer firefighters and firefighting in other cities, disasters in other parts of the nation which had an effect upon the LAFD and the development of fire engines, ladder trucks, water towers and other apparatus which found its way into LAFD usage, came from my book *Fire Engines, Firefighters,* published in 1976 by Crown Publishers, Inc.

Considerable material came from LAFD annual reports, minutes of the fire commission, incident scenarios in headquarter's files, fire company journals, and *The Firemen's Grapevine.* Portions of some chapters in the book were adapted from my articles in *Fire Engineering, Firehouse,* and *Fire Engines, Firefighters.*

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I will forever be grateful for the enthusiastic encouragement and assistance of many present and retired members of the LAFD, their families and widows; many of whom scoured their attics for long-lost historical memorabilia.

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The index was prepared by Ruth H. Hoover.

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Paul Ditzel
Woodland Hills, California

Members of the LAFD centennial book review committee meet with Jostens representative and the author-editor. Seated, left to right, President William A. Burnidge, Los Angeles Firemen's Relief Association and Assistant Chief Peter R. Lucarelli, Centennial Committee Chairman; standing, left to right, Public Information Officer Vince Marzo, Managing Editor; Jack Tingley of Jostens Printing & Publishing Division; Paul Ditzel, Author-Editor; Battalion Chief Richard W. Baker, Centennial Book Review Committee Chairman and Jim Perry, Editor, The Firemen's Grapevine.

CHRONOLOGY OF LAFD FIRE STATION LOCATIONS

1	1886	26 Plaza Street
	1888	1901 Pasadena Avenue
	1941	2230 Pasadena Avenue
2	1886	Main Street near First Street
	1893	410-412 North Main Street
	1894	Second Street and Boyle Avenue
	1895	2127 East First Street
	1924	2127 East First Street (new building)
3	1887	114 West Third Street
	1894	410-412 North Main Street
	1900	346-348 South Hill Street
	1901	217 South Hill Street
	1924	217 South Hill Street (new building)
	1980	108 Fremont Avenue
4	1888	26 Plaza Street
	1889	16th Street near Hope Street
	1900	227 Aliso Street
	1948	800 North Main Street
5	1888	Ninth Street near Main Street
	1893	Main Street near Adams Boulevard
	1900	525 East Fourth Street
	1950	6621 West Manchester Avenue
6	1888	Second Street and Boyle Avenue
	1894	114 West Ninth Street
	1899	916 South Santee Street
	1900	1279 West Temple Street
	1928	1279 West Temple Street (new building)
	1949	534 East Edgeware Road (same building, new site)
7	1888	Temple Street near Edgeware Road
	1899	328 East 24th Street
	1949	2824 South Main Street
	1969	Closed
8	1893	Ninth Street near Main Street
	1894	114 West Third Street
	1896	346-348 South Hill Street
	1900	1839 South Hoover Street
	1950	1401 South Union Avenue
	1967	Closed
	1971	11351 Tampa Avenue, Northridge
9	1899	916 South Santee Street
	1960	430 East Seventh Street
10	1899	1615 South Hill Street
	1951	1335 South Olive Street
11	1900	1819 West Seventh Street
	1958	1819 West Seventh Street (new building)
12	1903	5921 Pasadena Avenue (Figueroa Street)
	1949	5921 Figueroa Street (new building)
13	1900	2669 West Pico Boulevard
	1950	1206 South Vermont Avenue
14	1902	3401 South Central Avenue
	1950	3401 South Central Avenue (new building)
15	1900	3202 South McClintock Avenue
	1950	915 West Jefferson Boulevard
16	1904	139 North Hope Street
	1962	2011 North Eastern Avenue
17	1905	2100 East Seventh Street
	1927	710 South Santa Fe Avenue
	1980	1601 South Santa Fe Avenue
18	1906	2616 South Hobart Street
	1968	12050 Balboa Boulevard, Granada Hills
19	1906	1435 North Main Street
	1949	12229 Sunset Boulevard
20	1907	2144 Sunset Boulevard
	1953	2144 Sunset Boulevard (new building)
21	1907	1187 East 52nd Street
	1933	4925 Compton Avenue (temporary)
	1941	1187 East 52nd Street (new building)
22	1909	4352 South Main Street
	1948	4366 South Main Street
	1979	Closed
23	1910	225 East Fifth Street
	1960	Closed
	1963	17281 Sunset Boulevard, Pacific Palisades
24	1910	204 South Hewitt Street
	1966	Closed
	1969	9411 Wentworth Street, Sunland
25	1911	2927 Stephenson Street (Whittier Boulevard)
	1979	2927 Whittier Boulevard (new building)
26	1912	2475 West Washington Boulevard
	1970	2009 South Western Avenue
27	1913	1625 North Cahuenga Boulevard
	1930	1355 North Cahuenga Boulevard
28	1913	644 South Figueroa Street
	1969	Closed
29	1913	158 South Western Avenue
30	1913	1401 South Central Avenue
	1980	Closed
31	1914	700 West Slauson Avenue
	1929	700 West Slauson Avenue (new building)
	1971	Closed
32	1914	2930 West First Street (Beverly Boulevard)
	1972	Closed
33	1914	244 West Florence Avenue
	1971	6406 South Main Street
34	1914	3834 South Western Avenue
	1951	3661 Seventh Avenue
35	1915	1314 North Vermont Avenue
	1953	1601 Hillhurst Avenue
36	1915	630 Beacon Street, San Pedro
	1928	638 Beacon Street, San Pedro
	1972	Closed
37	1916	City of Wilmington
	1918	Sawtelle area
	1922	1003 Federal Street
	1943	1090 Veteran Avenue
38	1917	124 East "I" Street, Wilmington
	1948	124 East "I" Street, Wilmington (new building)
39	1919	415 Sylvan Street, Van Nuys
	1939	14415 Sylvan Street, Van Nuys
40	1920	406 Tuna Street, Terminal Island
	1950	406 Tuna Street, Terminal Island (new building)
	1972	Closed
	1977	Reopened
	1982	Closed
	1985	330 Ferry Street, Terminal Island
41	1923	1439 North Gardner Street
42	1923	2031 Colorado Boulevard
	1959	2021 Colorado Boulevard
43	1923	7620 National Boulevard
	1942	10234 National Boulevard
44	1924	929 Cypress Avenue
45	1924	957 South Norton Avenue
46	1924	1409 West Vernon Avenue

The above locations and start of service dates for LAFD fire stations were compiled from LAFD building administration services section files by Firefighter Don Dodd and Public Information Officer Vince Marzo.

APPENDIX (Continued)

Fire Station 46

	1979	*4370 South Hoover Street*
47	*1924*	*4927 Huntington Drive North*
	1981	*4575 Huntington Drive South*
48	*1924*	*1601 South Grand Avenue, San Pedro*
	1984	*Closed - Relocated to Fire Station 101*
49	*1924*	*271 South Fries Street, Wilmington (301 South Fries Street)*
	1968	*400 Matsonia Way, Berth 194, Wilmington*
50	*1924*	*1527 Winfield Place (11th Place)*
	1950	*Closed*
	1958	*3036 Fletcher Drive*
51	*1924*	*817 North Seward Avenue*
	1967	*Closed*
	1985	*10435 Sepulveda Boulevard*
52	*1924*	*1010 North Van Ness Avenue*
53	*1924*	*438 Mesa Street, San Pedro*
54	*1924*	*5730 Angelus Vista (Crenshaw Boulevard)*
55	*1924*	*4455 York Boulevard*
56	*1924*	*2838 Rowena Avenue*
57	*1924*	*729 West Manchester Avenue*
58	*1924*	*129 South Loma Drive (Former quarters of Chemical Company No. 1 and, later, Hose Company No. 4 in a station which first opened in 1892 at 137 South Belmont Avenue.)*
	1949	*1556 South Robertson Boulevard*
59	*1924*	*1624 Purdue Avenue*
	1963	*11505 West Olympic Boulevard*
60	*1924*	*11222 Weddington Street, North Hollywood*
	1949	*5320 Tujunga Avenue, North Hollywood*
61	*1929*	*5821 West Third Street*
	1984	*Closed - Relocated to Fire Station 68 and Fire Station 13*
62	*1925*	*213 Rose Avenue, Venice*
	1950	*3631 Centinela Avenue*
63	*1925*	*1713 Speedway, Venice*
	1942	*1930 Shell Avenue, Venice*
64	*1926*	*118 West 108th Street*
	1951	*118 West 108th Street (new building)*
65	*1924*	*1645 East 103rd Street*
	1936	*1525 East 103rd Street*
66	*1928*	*1715 West Florence Avenue*
67	*1928*	*2520 West View Street*
	1972	*Closed*
68	*1929*	*5213 West Pico Boulevard*
69	*1929*	*15162 Beverly Street, Pacific Palisades (15162 Sunset Boulevard)*
	1967	*15045 Sunset Boulevard, Pacific Palisades*
70	*1929*	*113 South Griffith Street*
	1935	*3516 North Broadway*
	1972	*Closed*
	1980	*9861 Reseda Boulevard, Northridge*
71	*1928*	*10601 Chalon Road*
	1929	*10801 Bellagio Road*
	1948	*107 South Beverly Glen Boulevard*
72	*1933*	*7248 Owensmouth Avenue, Canoga Park*
	1978	*6811 De Soto Avenue, Canoga Park*
73	*1933*	*7419 Reseda Boulevard, Reseda*
74	*1932*	*7157 Valmont Street, Tujunga*
	1950	*7777 Foothill Boulevard, Tujunga*
75	*1932*	*Olympic Village, Baldwin Hills (temporary)*
	1936	*11242 Laurel Canyon Boulevard, Mission Hills*
	1960	*15345 San Fernando Mission Boulevard, Mission Hills*
76	*1937*	*12601 Mulholland Drive (Mountain Patrol 1)*
	1943	*Closed*
	1951	*3111 North Cahuenga Boulevard*
77	*1941*	*8943 Glenoaks Boulevard, Sun Valley*
78	*1943*	*4230 Coldwater Canyon Avenue, Studio City*
79	*1942*	*18030 South Vermont Avenue, Gardena*
80	*1941*	*5909 Imperial Highway*
	1956	*10435 South Sepulveda Boulevard*
	1985	*6911 World Way West*
80 North	*1975*	*10435 South Sepulveda Boulevard*
	1985	*Closed*
81	*1941*	*Berth 85, San Pedro*
	1944	*Berth 227, Terminal Island*
	1946	*Closed*
	1950	*14123 Nordhoff Street, Arleta*
82	*1951*	*1800 North Bronson Avenue*
83	*1942*	*16953 Ventura Boulevard, Encino*
	1948	*5001 North Balboa Boulevard, Encino*
84	*1949*	*5340 Canoga Avenue, Woodland Hills*
85	*1951*	*1331 West 253rd Street, Harbor City*
	1980	*1331 West 253rd Street, Harbor City (new building)*
86	*1961*	*4305 Vineland Avenue, North Hollywood*
87	*1951*	*10241 Balboa Boulevard, Northridge*
88	*1951*	*4645 North Sepulveda Boulevard, Sherman Oaks*
	1975	*5101 North Sepulveda Boulevard, Sherman Oaks*
89	*1959*	*7063 Laurel Canyon Boulevard, North Hollywood*
90	*1956*	*7921 Woodley Avenue, Van Nuys*
91	*1956*	*14430 Polk Street, Sylmar*
92	*1959*	*10556 West Pico Boulevard*
93	*1960*	*19059 Ventura Boulevard, Tarzana*
94	*1960*	*4470 Coliseum Street*
95	*1959*	*10010 International Road*
96	*1962*	*21800 Marilla Street, Chatsworth*
97	*1962*	*8021 Mulholland Drive*
98	*1960*	*13035 Van Nuys Boulevard, Pacoima*
99	*1963*	*14145 Mulholland Drive*
100	*1961*	*6751 Louise Avenue, Van Nuys*
101	*1962*	*1414 West 25th Street, San Pedro*
102	*1962*	*13200 Burbank Boulevard, Van Nuys*
103	*1961*	*18143 Parthenia Street, Northridge*
104	*1962*	*8349 Winnetka Avenue, Canoga Park*
105	*1962*	*6345 Fallbrook Avenue, Woodland Hills*
106	*1962*	*23004 Roscoe Boulevard, Canoga Park*
107	*1963*	*20225 Devonshire Street, Chatsworth*
108	*1962*	*12601 Mulholland Drive (1924 - Mountain Patrol 1)*
	1977	*12520 Mulholland Drive (1963 - Coldwater Signal Office)*
109	*1962*	*16500 Mulholland Drive (1924 - Mountain Patrol 2)*
	1972	*16500 Mulholland Drive (new building)*
110	*1962*	*Berth 29, San Pedro*
	1983	*Berth 44-A, 2945 Miner Street, San Pedro*
111	*1919*	*First Street and the Wharf, San Pedro*
	1927	*Berth 260, 954 South Seaside Avenue, Terminal Island*
112	*1925*	*Berth 227, Terminal Island*
	1986	*Berth 85, San Pedro*

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THE LAST ALARM . . .

> "There are times when words fail to convey the depths of brotherly feeling, when in this dangerous service of ours, some man is called upon to pay the extreme penalty which this work exacts. There is not a man in the department whose heart does not go out in sympathy to those who are left behind, for not one of us knows that the next alarm of fire may be the last call for him."
>
> Chief Engineer Ralph J. Scott,
> in a letter to the mother
> of Fireman Ercil G. Morse of Truck 5,
> who was killed in the line of duty,
> April, 1924.

Photo Courtesy of Boris Yaro

REQUIESCAT IN PACE

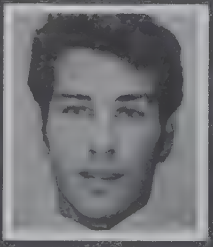
Firefighter Benjamin Pinel
Engine 54
December 4, 1984
Smoke inhalation, arson fire

Paramedic James T. Fitzpatrick
Rescue 105
September 23, 1982
Cardiac arrest during rescue

Apparatus Operator Thomas G. Taylor
Truck 60
January 28, 1981
Roof collapse, arson fire

Firefighter Frank Hotchkin
Truck 1
September 27, 1980
Fall through roof at Armory fire

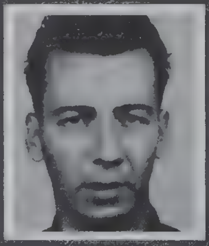
Fireman Lynn R. Hazlett
Squad 39
May 12, 1979
Suffocation in arson fire


Fireman Brian E. Phillips
Truck 102
April 25, 1979
Fall from aerial ladder, arson fire

Fireman Dominic A. Pascal
Truck 93
August 21, 1975
Traffic mishap

Capt. Kenneth D. Kinnaman
Engine 38
March 22, 1973
Crane collapse

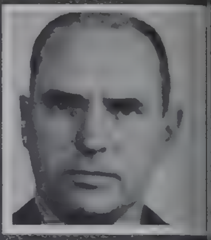
Fireman Paul R. Widrig, Jr.
Engine 33
February 22, 1972
Mezzanine collapse at fire

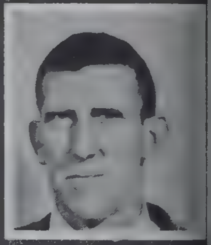

Fireman Theodore A. Currie
Engine 33
February 22, 1972
Mezzanine collapse at fire

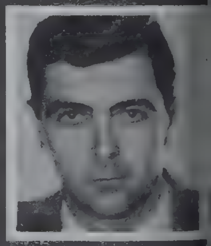
Fireman Donald J. Romps
Truck 30
September 11, 1970
Suffocation, structure fire

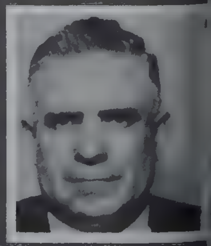
Fireman Thomas Collier, Jr.
Snorkel 3
July 5, 1970
Snorkel overturned at fire

Fireman Robert C. Gladden
Engine 69
November 25, 1968
Cardiac arrest at fire









apt. Clifford L.
Collord, Jr.
ngine 32
ebruary 7, 1968
urned in elevator

reman Warren E.
Tilson
ngine 61
ugust 15, 1965
uilding collapse, Watts
Riots

spector Robert L.
Gillies, Jr.
ountain Patrol
nuary 14, 1962
g plunged into ravine

eman Thomas O.
Morse
uck 26
rch 11, 1961
rns, structure fire

eman James E.
Hassan
gine 27
cember 11, 1958
of collapse at fire

uto Fireman James L.
Catlow
gine 39
vember 12, 1955
rns, La Tuna Canyon
Brush Fire

t. Michael J. Carter
gine 27
e 9, 1950
diac arrest, commercial
uilding fire

Fireman Clyde Neff, Jr.
Engine 4
November 2, 1949
Fall from apparatus

Fireman Andrew A. Lechert
Engine 73
October 26, 1949
Heart attack at fire

Fireman John H. Herbert
Truck 4
March 20, 1949
Suffocation in basement fire

Fireman Hugh J. Travers
Salvage 28
November 23, 1947
Furniture store flashover

Auto Fireman Everett H.
Young
Engine 16
November 12, 1947
Rock thrown at apparatus

Assistant Chief Charles
Fuselehr
Circa 1906
Buggy Crash

Fireman Monroe C. Karn
Engine 54
July 21, 1944
Ammonia exposure

Fireman James C. Slinkard
Engine 8
November 8, 1941
Fall from apparatus

Fireman Tony Arisco
Engine 54
May 5, 1941
Fall at factory fire

Fireman Benjamin O. Gause
Truck 39
September 9, 1940
Collision while driving battalion
chief

Fireman Elin Imbs
Engine 46
July 2, 1940
Cardiac arrest at fire

Fireman Ben H. Morris
Rescue 66
April 6, 1940
Pit rescue attempt

Auto Fireman John C. Hough
Engine 3
December 12, 1939
Gray Building fire injuries

Fireman Joseph W. Kacl
Truck 3
November 6, 1939
Gray Building floor collapse

Fireman Wilbert Vogel
Engine 7
August 9, 1937
Church fire roof collapse

Fireman Paul Shapro
Engine 22
April 5, 1936
Cardiac arrest while sliding
pole

Fireman George A. Damron
Engine 2
September 12, 1935
Burns, commercial building
flash fire

Capt. Lawrence W. Krumsiel
Engine 2
September 8, 1935
Burns, commercial building
flash fire

Capt. Fred W. Toenjes
Engine 43
April 8, 1935
Drowned during flood rescue

Fireman Silvestre Madrid
Engine 2
April 21, 1932
Collision with auto

Capt. Elwood H. Henry
Engine 10
September 14, 1930
Fall during rescue

Fireman Harry L. Tree
Truck 4
March 21, 1929
Fall from apparatus

Fireman Ross Sechrist
Engine 31
December 23, 1926
Electrocution at fire

Fireman Ercil G. Morse
Truck 5
April 7, 1924
Fall through skylight

Fireman Harry C. Powell
Engine 9
November 19, 1922
Crushed between apparatus
and trolley at fire

Fireman Harry J. Custer
Truck 5
February 12, 1922
Collision with trolley car

Lieut. Roman W. Ritters
Engine 1
June 20, 1919
Brush fire, Mt. Washington

Engineer Harry E. Buckingham
Engine 20
February 9, 1909
Overexertion, exposure

Fireman Adolph Hermanson
Engine 10
December 30, 1906
Fall from window

Capt. J. Clinton Johnson
Engine 8
February 12, 1905
Exposure

History shrouds the names, dates, and descriptions of incidents in which members of the Los Angeles Fire Department were killed in the line of duty. Records of the Volunteer Fire Department are as vague. Evidence strongly suggests that firefighters were killed during the volunteer era and the early days of the Los Angeles Fire Department. Among the earliest probable fatalities was Firefighter H. Anderson of Chemical Engine Company No. 1 when it was located at the Old Plaza Fire Station. Details could not be found during preparation of this book.

Given the dangers of firefighting, it seems inconceivable that records show no other department members who were killed in the line of duty during the nearly twenty years from the 1886 start of the LAFD until the first fully-recorded fatality, February 12, 1905. There are, moreover, differing honor rolls naming those who gave their lives during the Los Angeles Fire Department's first century. The editor, staff, and the Centennial Book Review Committee as well as LAFD Historical Committee members therefore decided to omit the names of those members whose injuries or illnesses resulted in death which did not obviously occur during the timeframe of an alarm response, on-scene activity, or returning from an incident.

In the late 1970's, the rank designations of fireman and auto fireman were changed to firefighter and apparatus operator, respectively.

CENTENNIAL MUSTER:
PERPETUATING
A TRADITION

The largest firemen's muster in California history marked the August 23-24, 1986, state championships as part of the Los Angeles Fire Department's 100th Birthday Celebration.

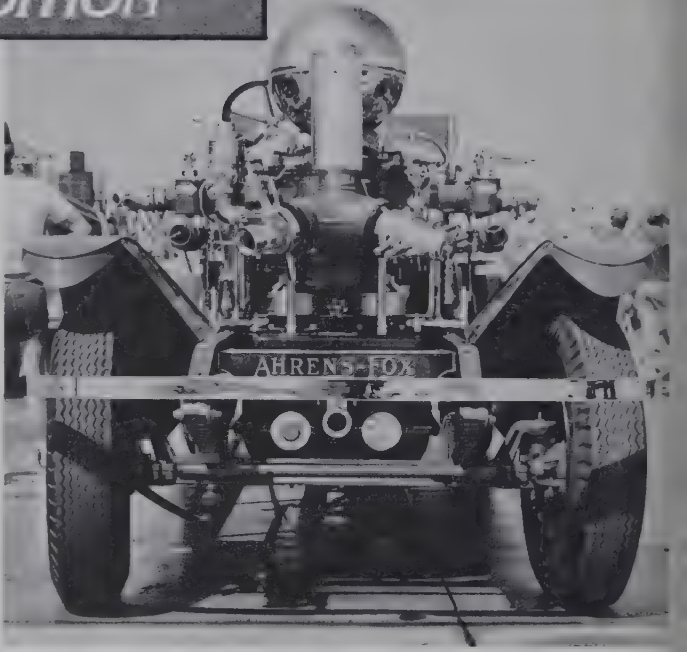
More than 12,000 people and competitors from about 50 fire departments throughout the state, as well as 100 pieces of apparatus of all types, made for a muster that will long be remembered.

Site of the muster was the Van Nuys Air National Guard Base, 8030 Balboa Boulevard, Van Nuys. The muster began with a parade of old apparatus. Especially enthralling to muster attendees and participants were LAFD helicopter flyovers. Swooping in one-by-one, three helicopters made drops of red, white and blue water into a nearby flood control channel.

The muster marked the debut of the restoration of one of the LAFD's first Amoskeag steam pumpers by LAFD volunteers Larry Hoerner, Lane Kemper, Mort Shuman and Tony Zar. The steamer, which pumped during the muster, marked the first time the 750-gallon-per-minute engine was publicly seen in action for nearly 100 years. The Amoskeag was awarded a trophy for the best horse-drawn entry in the muster.

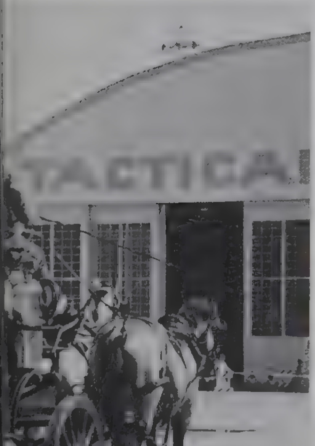
Perpetuating a tradition that is as old as the fire service, the muster included competitions in events such as men's and women's bucket brigades and hose carts, antique fire apparatus, as well as hand-operated and motorized pumpers and hose wagons. Teams were judged by the time it took them to lay a hoseline, charge it with water and knockdown a traffic cone.

Inspector Howard Kaplan, president and co-founder of the Los Angeles City Firemen's Muster Association, chaired the centennial muster committee. The muster was several years in the planning. Kaplan said that more than $10,000 in proceeds from the muster were given to the Alisa Ann Ruch Burn Foundation and to the widows and orphans fund of the Los Angeles Firemen's Relief Association.



PHOTOS BY BRADLEY DITZEL

ONE WAY


TACTICA

As paramedics attend a patient, Task Force 1 Commander Jim Kinninger directs extrication of a traffic victim following a Pasadena Freeway crash. The difficult rescue operation required the assistance of Task Force 12 (photo courtesy of Bill Thost, FS 15.).

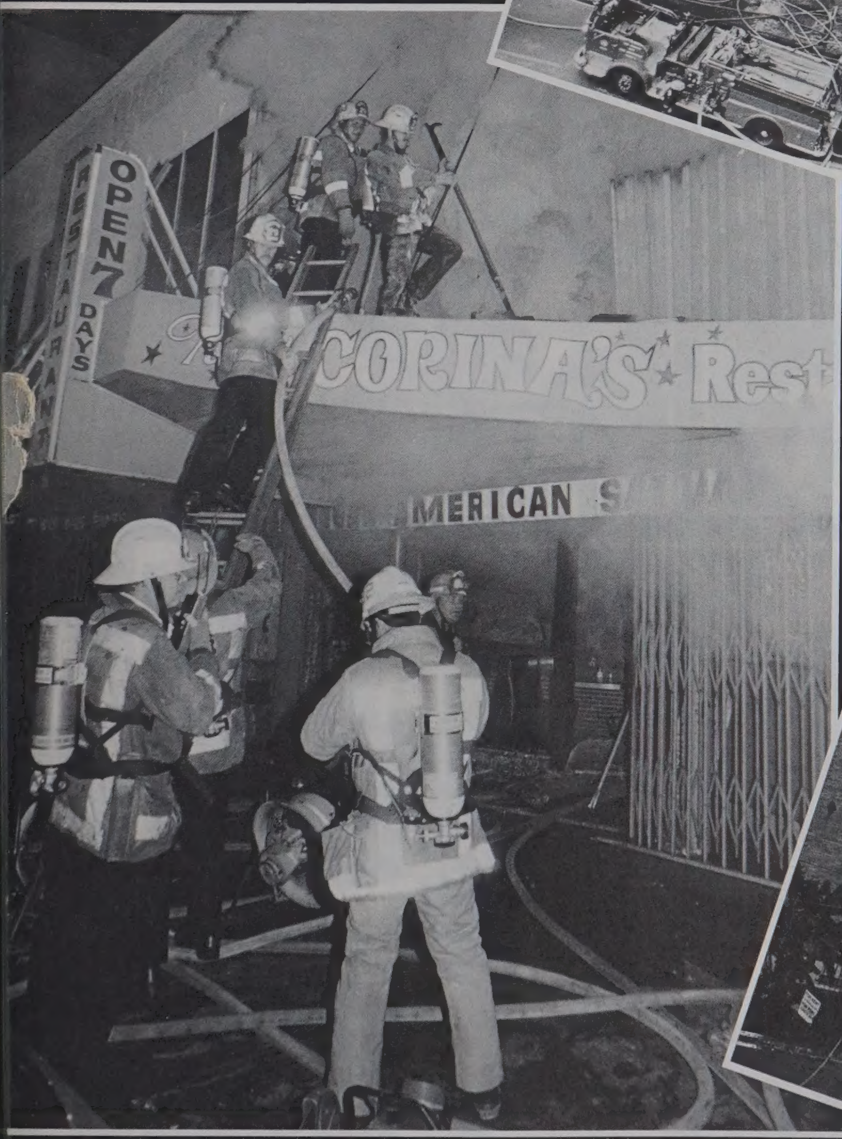
Capt. Hal Roberts of Engine 55 was among firefighters battling stacks of burning railroad ties in the Southern Pacific Railroad yards. Photo courtesy of Mike Meadows, Los Angeles Times.

Six persons were killed and 24 injured, June 16, 1976, when construction workers accidentally punctured a gasoline pipeline. Vapors flashed and fires erupted throughout the neighborhood, as firefighters from 26 companies attacked the flames.

Hollywood area firefighters mount a vigorous attack as fire engulfs a recording studio.

GOLD STAR
KIIS FM
PEPSI
SILKSCREENING
VIDEO

Lance Maillis


OPEN 7 DAYS
RESTAURANT
CORINA'S ★ Rest
MERICAN

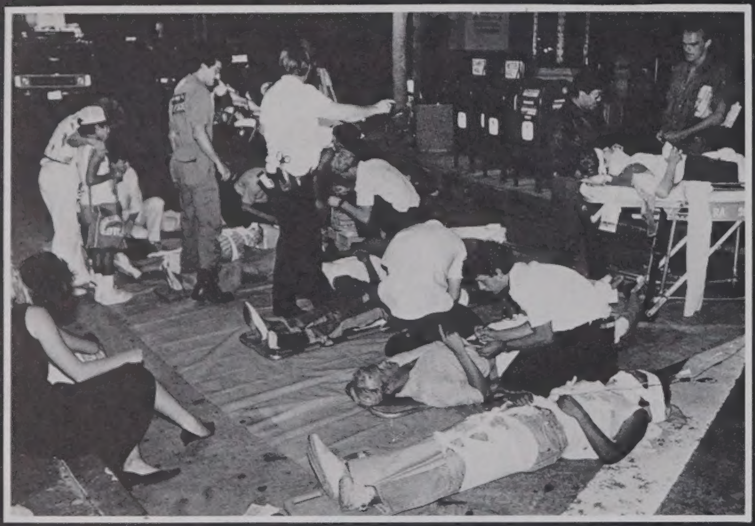
Brian Dixon

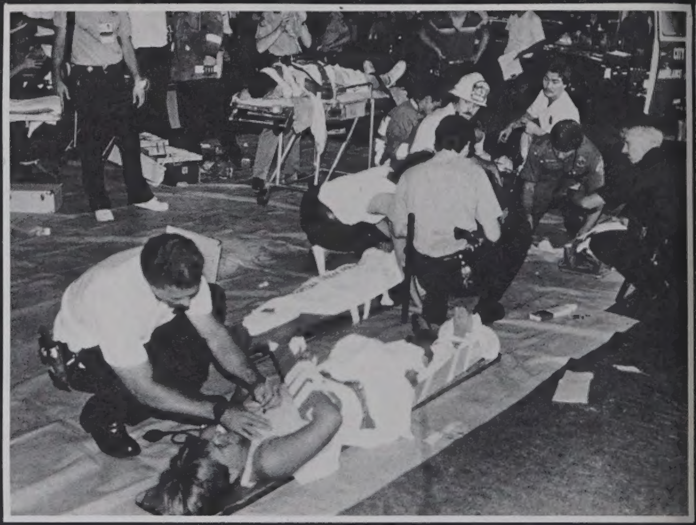
Collapsing roof creates a spectacular display of falling, burning debris as flames engulf Normandie Apartments in Hollywood. (Photo courtesy of Mike Meadows, Los Angeles Times.)

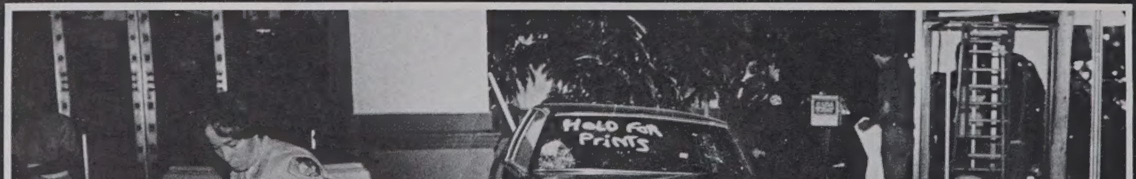
Firefighters from Hollywood area stations begin forcible entry preparatory to initial attack on fire involving New Corina's Restaurant on Hollywood Boulevard. Fire spread to adjoining occupancies and was fought by more than 15 companies of firefighters.

THE WESTWOOD NIGHTMARE
FRIDAY, JULY 27, 1984

On the Eve of the Opening Ceremonies
The Games of the XXIII Olympiad







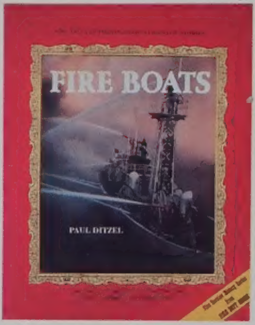
Deliberately veering his automobile onto a crowded Westwood Boulevard sidewalk, Daniel Young accelerated for a full city block while mowing down dozens of pedestrians. Westwood Village was filled with people on the evening before the start of the 1984 Olympic Games. Young did not stop until he slammed into a bus bench. In his 550-foot wake lay 54 pedestrians, including a young woman who was dying. This major multi-casualty incident called out a total of 12 paramedic rescue-ambulances and 15 fire companies to assist in first aid and transportation of patients to hospitals. Young, found guilty of murder, was sentenced to life in prison. (Photos courtesy of Mike Meadows, Los Angeles Times.)

ADDITIONAL TITLES IN THE FIRE BUFF HOUSE SERIES

FIRE BOATS

From the pen of Paul Ditzel

With spectacular photographs accompanying dramatic stories of past and present waterfront firefighters, FIREBOATS is the first complete history of the development of fireboats.



FIREBOATS takes us back to the days when firefighters rowed their boats to fires. The author shows us the era of steam-powered fireboats – which puffed almost as much smoke as the fire itself – and describes today's boats: zippy marina speedboats, hovercraft and amphibious fireboats.

Large fireboats packing a wallop that can knock down walls, tall boats with towers to reach shipboard fires, squatty boats to go under lake and river bridges – are all presented in this definitive look at the evolution of fireboats.

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$\$24^{95}$

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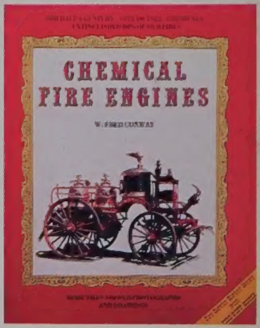

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FIRE ALARM!
PAUL DITZEL
FOR FIRE
BREAK GLASS
OPEN DOOR
PULL HANDLE
DOWN ONCE
LET GO
172

How fire alarm boxes worked – and why they sometimes did not – is a facet of American history that has never before been definitively told.

Thoroughly illustrated with more than 100 photos, the book tells how alarms were sounded in American cities: by pistol shots and even Philadelphia's Liberty Bell, before a Harvard medical student and fire buff revolutionized the sounding of fire alarms with his invention of the first practical fire alarm box and telegraphy system in 1852.

FIRE ALARM! also chronicles the box numbers, times and dates they were sounded for many of America's most historic fires. Mrs. O'Leary's cow may have started The Great Chicago Fire, but the blaze might never have spread throughout the city if the proper alarm had been sounded when Box 296 was pulled.

$\$24^{95}$

PAUL DITZEL

Paul Ditzel, widely acclaimed as the "dean" of fire service authors, has written 15 books and over 600 articles for magazines, including the *Readers Digest*. He is a contributing editor to *Firehouse Magazine*, and a former contributing editor to *Fire Engineering*. His best selling book, *Fire Engines, Firefighters*, was submitted for a Pulitzer Prize in American History.

He holds a Master of Science Degree from Northwestern University, where he graduated with highest scholastic honors. In 1967 he was appointed as the Los Angeles Fire Department's first civilian fire inspector.

Paul Ditzel brings to the Fire Buff House series of fire service history books the very finest research and colorful writing on firematic subjects. Additional volumes are in preparation.

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